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ABSTRACT

This study, based on data from a 1997 survey of 54 Nigerian primary schools and their client communities, was commissioned in order to assist the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in improving primary education services. Stakeholders consulted included parents, pupils, teachers and head teachers, community leaders, educational administrators, and supervisors in the target school areas. Serious problems were identified in the following areas: (1) infrastructure: classroom space and facilities were found to be inadequate and in poor repair, with insufficient funds to maintain facilities or obtain supplies; (2) instructional materials: textbooks supplies were inadequate; (3) staff conditions and training: many teachers lack minimum qualifications for primary school teaching--teacher morale is eroded by low pay, poor working conditions and inadequate facilities, gender imbalances in staff cadres, and wholesale staff transfers; (4) enrollment, attendance, and retention: regional imbalances in enrollment were found; (5) funding: tension exists between Local Government Areas (LGA) and the State Primary Education Boards that control federal funds for salaries and operational costs--local governments feel disenfranchised from control of schools and educational resources made available for their areas; and (6) community participation: while financial needs for building repairs and supplies are frequently met by parent and community-based organizations, economic differentiation results in inequitable community involvement. Wealthy families often abandon public primary schools in favor of private education. Recommendations are made for improvements to be made in each of these areas. (MM)

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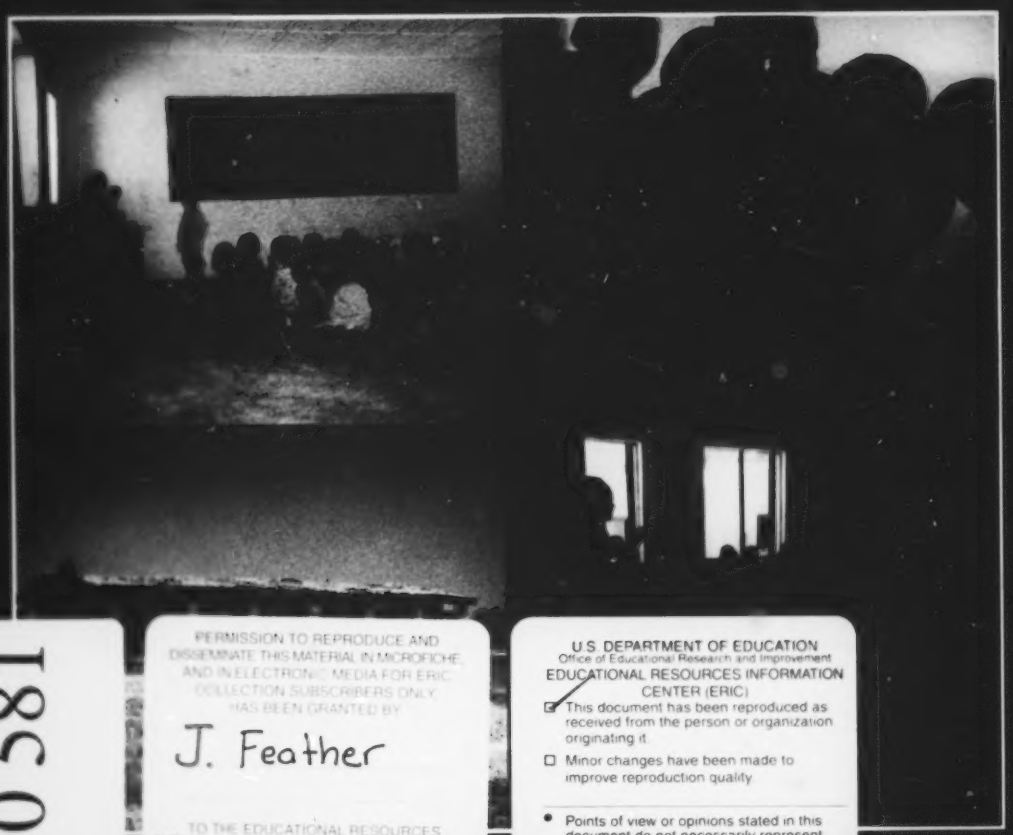
Primary Schools, Community, and Social Capital in Nigeria



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Africa Region Series

Hard Lessons

Primary Schools, Community, and Social Capital in Nigeria

Paul A. Francis

with S.P.I. Agi, S. Ogoh Alubo, Hawa A. Biu, A.G. Daramola, Uchenna M. Nzewi, and D.J. Shehu

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Hard Lessons
Primary Schools, Community, and Social Capital in Nigeria

A consultative survey of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders undertaken for the National Primary Education Commission

Paul A. Francis

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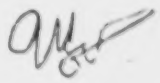
FOREWORD

Education is a basic condition for economic and social development and primary education is its foundation. The mobilization and management of the necessary human and material resources to ensure that children receive appropriate and good quality basic education is a complex challenge, and one which requires the collaboration of many partners — teachers, parents, administrators and community leaders.

In Nigeria, parents and communities have always played an important role in primary education through their support for construction, maintenance and management of schools. In developing policy and strategy for the primary education sub-sector, it was therefore natural and appropriate for the National Primary Education Commission to seek the views of these active stakeholders, as well as of teachers and educational administrators, on the current state of primary education and on ways of improving the service. This report is one outcome of those consultations, the findings and recommendations from which are also generating pilot programs to test new approaches.

The World Bank has supported these consultations through the Primary Education Project and also through technical assistance. The innovative work documented here thus illustrates the potential not only for partnership between the users and providers of primary education, but also between the World Bank and its clients.



Alan Gelb
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ABSTRACT

Consultations on access to, and the quality of, primary education services were held with stakeholders in fifty-four primary schools and communities in eighteen local government areas across Nigeria. Stakeholders consulted included parents, pupils, teachers and headteachers, community leaders, educational administrators and supervisors.

The morale of teachers and pupils was reasonably high. However, multiple constraints on the delivery of primary education services were documented. These include a shortage of classrooms and other facilities, their poor state of repair, and a general lack of books and educational materials. Inadequate teacher motivation and training were other significant factors inhibiting quality. While communities continue to play a central role in the building and maintenance of their primary schools, there was a strong perception amongst parents and others of low and declining standards. The study traces these problems to organizational and administrative weaknesses and inadequate financing. Broader social and economic processes, including changes in attitudes to education and in relations between school and community, are also implicated. Recommendations are made in the areas of community participation, staff conditions and training, infrastructure and facilities, instructional materials, enrollment, and the management and funding of primary education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study is based upon information collected during consultative surveys of fifty-four primary schools and their client communities across Nigeria undertaken in November and December, 1997. These surveys were commissioned in order to assist the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in improving primary education services by obtaining the views of potential beneficiaries on current services and their suggestions for improvement.

The surveys were carried out by six zonal research teams led by Dr. (Mrs.) Hawa A. Biu, Dr. (Mrs.) D.J. Shehu, Dr. S.O. Alubo, Dr. (Mrs.) U.M. Nzewi, Dr. A.G. Daramola and Dr. S.P.I. Agi. Membership of the teams is given in Annex 2. Within NPEC, technical guidance and logistical support were provided by, among others, Dr. P. Banu, Dr. C. Ubani, and Mr. P.M. Yissa. The World Bank Task Managers were Sudharshan Canagarajah and Eileen Nkwanga of the Africa Region Human Development group. Foluso Okunmadewa of the World Bank Resident Mission in Abuja provided extensive technical and administrative support. This study is based on the zonal reports, research field notes, and the findings of zonal and national workshops, held in February and March, 1998, and which brought together the researchers; representatives of parents, teachers and PTAs; LGEA, SPEB, and NPEC officials; and other interested parties. It was prepared by Paul Francis of the Institutional and Social Policy group, Africa Region, who was also primarily responsible for the research design and training.

The authors are particularly grateful to the numerous parents, pupils, community members, teachers, education officials, and officers of community organizations and NGOs, who gave generously of their time and knowledge to participate in these consultations. We join them in hoping that their efforts will improve future primary education services in Nigeria.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBO	-	Community Based Organization
LGA	-	Local Government Area
LGEA	-	Local Government Education Authority
LGES	-	Local Government Education Secretary
NCE	-	National Certificate of Education
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organization
NPEC	-	National Primary Education Commission
PTA	-	Parent-Teacher Association
PIPE	-	Partnership in Improvement of Primary Education
SPEB	-	State Primary Education Board
TC	-	Teachers Certificate
UPE	-	Universal Primary Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consultations were held with stakeholders in fifty-four primary schools and communities in eighteen local government areas across the six zones of Nigeria during November and December, 1997. Stakeholders consulted included parents, pupils, teachers and headteachers, community leaders, educational administrators and supervisors.

The school environment was found to be far from conducive to learning, pupil safety, security and health. Classroom space is inadequate, meaning that many children are either instructed in the open air or share classrooms with up to four other classes. As well as being insufficient in numbers, classrooms are generally in a poor state of repair. There is little or no funding to meet maintenance or running costs, or to obtain supplies of instructional materials and other educational inputs. Schools lack offices, desks and other furniture, and recreational facilities, and have few or no toilet facilities.

Teacher effectiveness and student learning are further limited by the inadequate supply of materials, frequent changes in recommended textbooks, the current textbook lending policy, and the late supply of record books.

Most teachers and headteachers were committed to their vocation. However, extremely low remuneration, poor working conditions, and inadequate facilities have inevitably eroded motivation and satisfaction. Many teachers do not have the minimum qualification for primary school teaching. In some areas, there are serious gender imbalances in staff cadres, reflected in the shortages of female teachers in much of the north of the country and of male teachers in parts of the south. Teaching is further disrupted by frequent and wholesale staff transfers. All of these factors have contributed to the declining prestige and status of teaching as a profession.

Regional imbalances in enrollments were found, with lower enrollment in the northern compared to southern zones, particularly with respect to female pupils. Attendance levels vary considerably between schools, and are often low in rural areas, especially during the farming season and on market days.

The transfer of management of the federal allocation for teachers' salaries and operational cost from Local Government Areas (LGA) to the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) and the State Primary Education Boards (SPEBs) has largely succeeded in ensuring that teachers' salaries are paid. Nevertheless, the fact that

Education Secretaries are responsible to SPEBs, rather than to the local councils which appoint them, has also often resulted in tensions between the LGA and SPEBs, conflicting pressures on the Education Secretaries, and a perception on the part of the local government that they are not meaningfully involved in the management of the schools and in the resources made available for their areas. SPEBs have also taken over a number of roles (e.g. for supplies and maintenance) originally envisaged as the responsibility of Local Government.

Little information is made available to the public regarding LGEA budgets and expenditure. The supervision of primary schools is sometimes irregular and often inadequate. Headmasters have no funds to respond to minor maintenance problems or to purchase supplies and incidentals.

Many of the problems identified stem from the inadequacy of funding for primary education. Sufficient resources are still not being made available to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure, provide essential educational materials, or even to pay teachers a living wage.

The consultations revealed a varying, but generally high, level of involvement in local primary schools by groups such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), school committees, community-based organizations (CBOs), and individual community members. Such local actors make a substantial contribution to their schools through the construction of school buildings, repairs and maintenance, and the provision of furniture and instructional materials. Many communities also participate in promoting the enrollment and attendance of pupils, and have an input, although a limited one, into the management of schools. However, PTAs, school councils and CBOs are faced with multiple and frequently overwhelming demands, and their role vis à vis other stakeholders in the management of primary education is not well-defined. In some cases, PTAs suffer from weak accountability and transparency.

Local involvement in the construction and management of primary schools has been predicated on the nexus of relations within communities and between them and their schools. However, this social capital is gradually being eroded both by a perception that government has gone back on the social contract of Universal Primary Education, and by the social fragmentation of communities themselves. Economic differentiation makes it more difficult for communities to project a common voice, and has led the more wealthy and influential to abandon public primary schools in favor of the private sector. The changing relationship between school and community is also exemplified in the declining status of teachers and their decreasing propensity to live in the community.

Recommendations are made in the areas of community participation, staff conditions and training, infrastructure and facilities, instructional materials, enrollment and attendance, structure and management of primary education, and funding for primary education.*

* Recommendations are tabulated in Box 13 and Table 6.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background: primary education in Nigeria

Some 15 million children are enrolled in Nigeria's 40,000 public primary schools. Formal primary education in what is now Nigeria dates back to the mission schools founded in the mid-nineteenth century which provided basic literacy and religious instruction initially in the coastal areas. During the colonial period, the state provided limited assistance through grants to schools, but missions remained the main providers of primary education until in 1968, eight years after political independence, when the government took over all schools. However, access to formal schooling remained limited, especially in the north of the country, until an ambitious policy of free and universally available primary education (UPE) was introduced in 1976. In subsequent years, enrollment increased radically, doubling from 6 million to 12 million between 1976 and 1980, and rising to 14.5 million in 1982.

In 1981, the federal government withdrew from financing primary education, transferring its management to state and local government levels. By 1983, the dramatic increases in enrollment had come to a halt. According to the available data (which might have been inflated during the period of expansion), primary enrollment dropped 20 percent in the following four years and fell below 12 million by 1986/87. The main reason for the reversals in enrollment trends in primary education was the sharp economic decline following the oil slump in the 1980s.[1] With the sudden shrinkage of funds for the rapidly expanding system, capital investments were suspended, resulting in many unfinished educational facilities throughout the country. At the same time, the reduced provision for recurrent expenditures made it difficult to sustain routine functions in schools, including payment of teachers' salaries. As fees were introduced into many schools contrary to government-stated policy, and quality declined, some parents began to withdraw their children from schools. The gross primary enrollment ratio, which increased from 32 percent in 1965 and 46 percent in 1975/76 to 93 percent in 1982/83, had declined to around 78 percent in 1990 (World Bank 1994).

[1] Per pupil expenditures on primary education had already been fall since before the declaration of UPE: from $92 in 1970 to $60 in 1974 and to $48 in 1981.

One result of the withdrawal of the federal government from primary education was a widespread failure to pay primary school teachers, a situation which resulted in long-running disputes and ultimately in a national strike by primary school teachers. To address this and other problems in the sub-sector, in 1988 the federal government established the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC), and made it responsible for management, policy and fund allocation in the primary education sub-sector.

In 1991, NPEC was dissolved, and responsibility for funding returned to state and local government levels. However, only two years later, Decree no. 96 of 1993 re-established NPEC along with the structure of State Primary Education Boards (SPEBs) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA)s.

The functions of NPEC include:[2]

- prescribing minimum standards of primary education;
- advising on the funding of primary education;
- receiving the National Primary Education Fund from the Federal Government and allocating it to the Primary Education Board of each state; and
- collating masterplans for the balanced and coordinated development of primary education.

Decree no. 96 of 1993 also re-established the National Primary Education Fund, which was to be deducted directly from the Federation Account and allocated to the states according to the following formula: 50 percent on the basis of equality of states, 30 percent on the basis of school enrollment, and 20 percent to educationally disadvantaged states.

At the state, level, the State Primary Education Boards (SPEBs) were established, with the following included amongst their functions:

- management of primary schools in the state;
- recruitment of senior staff in the primary education sector;
- disbursement of funds received from NPEC to the LGAs;
- undertaking new capital projects; and
- monitoring the LGEAs.

Local Government Education Authorities are responsible for:

- day-to day running of primary schools in the LGA;
- payment of teachers' salaries and allowances from funds disbursed by NPEC through the SPEBs;
- acquisition of materials and equipment to all primary schools; and
- undertaking general maintenance of primary school building and infrastructure.

[2] Decree number 96 of 1993: SS. 3, 4, 7, 9.

School and community: participation, social capital and coproduction

The significance of communities' contribution to educational services is apparent from the briefest acquaintance Nigeria's primary schools. Parents and local organizations continue to play, as they have in the past, an indispensable role in construction, maintenance and management of their primary schools. Such local involvement in educational provision represents an example of the alliance of formal and informal (or 'indigenous') institutions, which Dia has argued is a key factor in effective and sustainable development (see Dia, 1996; on formal and informal institutions in Nigeria, see Francis, 1996). More specifically with regard to educational services, Colletta and Perkins (1995) have asserted that participation by parents and other stakeholders in the provision of education can help to increase the relevance and quality of education, improve ownership and build consensus, reach remote and disadvantaged groups, mobilize additional resources, and build institutional capacity. Research has investigated some of these relationships (e.g. Iffat, 1996; Condy 1998; Rugh and Bossert, 1998).

Community participation in education may be thought of as a manifestation of social capital. Formed through repeated transaction and interaction, social capital has been defined as 'the information, trust and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks' (Woolcock, 1998; see also Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993). Social capital is a broad term and has been used in the literature in a variety of ways. The form most relevant to the delivery of education and other public services is that which resides in the relations between government and civil society, enabling a 'state-society synergy' through which development outcomes can be maximized (Evans, 1996). Ostrom (1996) has used the term 'coproduction' to describe the partnership of school and community in providing educational services. She has defined the term as:

> 'the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not "in" the same organization. [...] All public goods and services are potentially produced by the regular producer and by those who are frequently referred to as the client.'

These concepts — participation, social capital, and coproduction — all emphasize the potential contribution of parents and communities towards improving the quality of primary education. They point beyond a concern with purely technical educational inputs or formal organizations — important though these are — to the social matrix within which formal education takes place, and to which education, in turn, contributes. They lead us to ask what conditions favor effective synergy between school administrators, teachers, and the community, and what policy and administrative measures can promote these. The findings of the consultations reported here show that the unpredictable policy and fiscal environment for primary education in recent decades has not favored a productive relationship between state and community. However, it takes at least two to coproduce, and effective synergy depends on the nature of community, as well as the actions of the state. In this area, our findings suggest that social, cultural and economic change are also influencing the capacity of communities to be effective partners in educational provision.

Origins of the study

This study is based on consultative surveys undertaken for the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in order to assess the current state of primary education and identify ways of improving service delivery in the sub-sector. The consultations were intended to give an opportunity for a broad range of stakeholders to express their priorities and aspirations regarding a service and institution of prime importance to their children's, and their country's, future.

The consultations used semi-structured interviews to draw on the perceptions, priorities, and experience of service users and providers in fifty-four communities selected from the six zones of Nigeria, to explore the factors which affect access to, and the quality of, primary education. They document the current situation and identify ways of improving service provision, especially for the needy, in both rural and urban areas. The community consultations were conducted in close partnership with Nigerian institutions under the leadership of NPEC. Findings were disseminated through a series of zonal and national workshops in order to catalyze and support practical initiatives aimed at improving the delivery of primary education, to inform future policy, and to develop pilot initiatives to test innovative approaches.

Objectives

The objectives of the consultations were to:

(a) assess expectations and levels of satisfaction with primary education on the part of service users and providers (parents, teachers, educational administrators, etc.);

(b) investigate perceived constraints to the improvement of service provision and assess suggestions of the various stakeholders for improving services, together with the potential and willingness to realize them;

(c) identify and describe existing innovative approaches to improving performance in the delivery of social services through community participation, targeting, client involvement, fiscal decentralization or other mechanisms;

(d) develop recommendations for the development of pilot initiatives to test or replicate these approaches to be implemented within the framework of the on-going Primary Education Project.

Methods

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were used in order to give a voice to the various stakeholders to be consulted, and to allow for the collection of detailed and relatively in-depth information on schools and their social context. These methods included semi-structured interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, brief

questionnaires, and documentary analysis.[3] The research was undertaken in November and December, 1997.

The survey was designed to ensure, within the resources available for the research, representativeness of selected schools and communities in terms of the social, economic and linguistic diversity of the nation. The main sample was selected on a random, geographically stratified, basis. Some purposive sampling of communities and schools was also used in order to examine particular phenomena and themes. The country was divided into six zones, based on state boundaries and ecological and ethno-linguistic variation. Within each of these zones, three local government areas (LGAs) were selected, two rural and one urban. The LGAs were selected purposively so as to represent the main ecological and socio-linguistic areas of each zone (the sampled LGAs and schools are listed in Annex 1 and shown on the map).

Key informants interviewed at LGA level included Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) staff, community leaders, traditional leaders, and heads of community development associations. They were generally interviewed individually.

Within each LGA, three primary schools were selected. Schools were grouped into three categories on the basis of their accessibility (low, medium and high), and one school was selected at random from each group. In addition, researchers attempted to identify primary schools where particularly effective, innovative, or participatory activities are under way, in order to find out more about the social processes which underlay exceptional performance. The consultations thus involved both clustered representative and purposive sampling. In each zone, one thematic issue of particular relevance was also selected for in-depth investigation. These topics were girls' access to primary education (northeast zone), girls and Islamiya schools (northwest), parents' participation in primary school education (north-central zone), boy-child enrollment and drop-out in the southeast, public, private, and religious stakeholders in primary school provision (southwest zone) and agitation for the return of communities to missions (south-south zone).

Stakeholders interviewed at community level included parents, pupils, headteachers, teachers, leaders and members of PTAs, CBOs and traditional leaders. Quotas were assigned for each category of respondent (see in Table 1), and sub-quotas established for gender, socio-economic group, or other applicable variables (e.g. class of pupil, experience of teacher). Nationally consistent guidelines for the interviews with the key stakeholder groups were prepared in advance at the initiation and training/piloting workshops which were held in Ijebu Ode and Jos respectively in October, 1997.

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[3] On research and monitoring methods in education, see Kane, 1995; McGinn and Borden, 1995; Heneveld, 1994. Previous research on primary education in Nigeria includes Urwick and Junaida, 1981; Lockheed and Komenan, 1998; Omohodion, 1989; Hinchcliffe, 1989.

Table 1: Respondent quotas for consultations

Respondent	*Minimum interviews per school/community*	*Total interviewed*	*Methods /comments*
Headteacher	1	54	Key informant interview
Teacher	3	162	Key informant interview
Parents of attenders and non-attenders	10	540	Semi-structured interviews (subquotas by sex, socio-economic group)
Pupils and non-attenders	10	540	Semi-structured interview, (sub-quotas by sex, socio-economic group)
PTA leaders/members	3	162	Focus group and individual interviews
Opinion leaders	5	270	Individual and focus group interviews with traditional chiefs, CBOs, NGOs; ad-hoc community gatherings and meetings.

Source: research manual

In each zone, research was undertaken by a cross-disciplinary team consisting of a sociologist versed in participatory research methods and an education specialist. These teams undertook all field investigations jointly. Quotations given in this report are from the survey's semi-structured and open-ended interviews as recorded in field notes.

The findings of the zonal teams were discussed in six zonal workshops in February, 1997, which brought together the researchers; representatives of parents, teachers and PTAs, LGEA, SPEB and NPEC officials, and other concerned parties. These meetings were followed by a national technical synthesis workshop for researchers, reviewers and representatives of NPEC held in Kaduna in March, 1998.

Overview of study

The next chapter gives an profile of the sampled primary schools and their facilities. Chapter 3 presents the findings of inquiries at the Local Government Area level. Chapters 4 and 5 present the perspectives of headteachers and teachers respectively, while Chapters 6 and 7 reports the views of parents and children. Chapter 8 explores the central question of the relationship between schools and communities. The final chapter presents conclusions about the state of primary education in Nigeria as perceived by its providers and users, and the social factors which underlie that condition. The recommendations for future action which emerged from the consultations and subsequent workshops are also reproduced here.

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Chapter 2

THE SCHOOLS

Fifty-four schools were sampled: twenty-one urban and thirty-three rural. The average school had just over 1,000 pupils in twenty classes. Urban schools were larger than rural, averaging 1,883 pupils, compared to 462 for rural schools. There was considerable variation not only in school size, but in the extent of school facilities and their condition. The descriptions given in Boxes 1 and 2 illustrate, respectively, an urban school from the top of the range, and a rural school from the lower part. Most schools fall somewhere in between. Maidamashi, however, illustrates more closely the condition of neglect which typified the majority of schools visited, especially in rural areas.[4]

Box 1: St. Francis' Primary School, Otukpo (Benue state)

St. Francis' is situated in Jericho, a modern quarter of Otukpo township populated mostly by Idoma speakers, though many Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa and other immigrants also live there. The school was established by the Catholic mission in 1954, and taken over by the government in the 197[illegible]. There are fifty-five teachers (forth-eight of which have an NCE qualification or higher) for the 2,126 pupils (a ratio of 1:39), who are enrolled in forty-five classes. Because there are only twenty-six classrooms, teaching takes place in morning and afternoon shifts. The school grounds are well laid-out, with trees and flowers, and bounded by intact concrete walls and a steel gate. Three security guards are employed to protect the premises. Although there is piped water and electricity in the neighborhood, the school benefits from neither. However, there is a library as well as modest laboratory facilities, and a headteacher's office.

Pupils interviewed were able to read and write, and the school has achieved considerable success in entrance examinations for distinguished secondary schools. Thirty-two of the school's fifty candidates for the common entrance examination had been successful in the previous year. Eighteen others passed the catholic common entrance. The school won the state inter-local government competition in 1997; three pupils from the school were selected to represent the state in the national football competition. School records (admission register, log book, inventory book, continuous assessment records, etc.) were available and up to date.

The community built six of the classrooms in 1978, and since then has reroofed four classroom blocks. It has provided chairs, tables and benches for the school, which was the one of the few schools in the sample to have sufficient furniture. The PTA also erected the boundary wall, provided gates for the compound, and is now reconstructing the latrines.

[4] Other examples will be found in the text. The location of sampled schools is shown on the map.

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Box 2: Maidamashi Primary School, Kachia LGA (Kaduna State)

Maidamashi (meaning 'what can disturb us?' in Hausa), is a rural community situated some fifty-five km from the LGA headquarters, linked to the Kaduna-Keffi road by a rough dirt track. Agriculture is the main activity in this Jaba-speaking community — ginger is an important cash crop alongside the cassava, millet and maize grown for subsistence. The Maidamashi Primary School was established in 1976 as a UPE school. In the ensuing years, no vote has been provided to build a proper block of classrooms for the children, and the classes take place in the village church. There is no water or electricity, no school office or library (or books), and no playground. No fence, trees, plants, or even stones, demarcate the compound.

There are 200 pupils enrolled in six classes. The church itself, cement-plastered mud structure, with rows of cement seats inside, serves as a classroom for four of the classes (when the weather permits, some are taught under the trees outside). A new church is being constructed by the congregation, and this incomplete, cement-block, structure serves as the classroom for the two senior classes, whose members sit on stones, some of them connected by planks. An abandoned DFRRI (Department of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure) signboard serves as the blackboard. Instructional material was not available even for the main subjects, though teachers do try to obtain old editions of textbooks. In spite of the lack of facilities, the compound is clean and tidy.

The attendance of the nine teachers appears regular from the records, and pupils seemed well-behaved. Relations with the community are said to be cordial, although parents complained that teachers did not maintain adequate discipline. For their part, teachers claimed that on occasion when children had been disciplined in school, parents had objected. They also said that community members kept their children from attending school. Records indeed showed irregular attendance during the farming season.

A new site for the school has been identified, and the community was persuaded to construct four mud and thatch-roof structures to serve as classrooms (having been threatened, they say, by the LGEA office with closure of the school if they did not comply). The community divided itself into quarters to mobilize labor for this purpose, and several levies were raised from parents, the latest being ₦ 100 for boys and ₦ 50 for girls to pay for plastering, doors and windows. Unfortunately, the project was proving beyond their resources, and several of the mud-constructed buildings have already collapsed in the rains.

Gender and enrollment

The proportion of pupils enrolled in sample schools who were girls averaged 47 percent, but varied by region, being lowest in the north-west (40 percent) and north-central (45 percent) zones. As Table 2 demonstrates, these sample figures are closely comparable with national statistics. Zamfara State, in the north-west, where only 21 percent of pupils are girls, has the lowest female enrollment ratio.

Table 2: *Nigeria's public primary schools: number and enrollment by gender and zone*

Zone	*Number of Schools*	*Total enrollment*	*Percentage female enrollment*	
			NPEC	*Survey*
North-east	5,785	2,462,765	40	49
North-west	9,728	2,648,662	35	45
North-central	8,585	2,553,293	43	40
South-east	4,304	1,868,596	49	51
South-west	5,155	2,813,550	49	51
South-south	6,647	2,333,079	50	48
All Nigeria	**40,204**	**14,679,945**	**44**	**47**

Source: NPEC data; consultation surveys.

Even within the north of the country, however, great variation was apparent with regard to gender and enrollment, especially between urban and rural areas. For example, in all three of the schools sampled in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Area (north-east zone), girls were in fact in the majority; and in one of the three Kano schools (NW zone), they actually accounted for 73 percent of pupils. This reflects the value placed on education for girls in urban areas, as well as the popularity of Islamic schooling for boys, especially in Kano.

Class size, pupil-teacher ratio and attendance

The mean pupil per teacher ratio was forty-one (forty-four in urban areas, thirty-six in rural). The average class size was forty-nine (sixty-one in urban areas; thirty-three in rural). The total number of teachers in urban schools was 40 percent greater than the number of classes, while in rural schools it was 8 percent lower. Thus, although the pupil- teacher ratio was more favorable in rural areas than in urban, there are insufficient teachers for the number of classes in rural schools.

Attendance (that is the proportion of enrolled pupils actually present on the first survey visit, which had not been made known to the school in advance), averaged 66 percent. It was somewhat higher in urban (68 percent) than in rural schools (61 percent). However, these averages conceal considerable variation: in more than of one in four of the sampled schools (fourteen of fifty-four) including one of three (eleven of thirty-three) rural schools, **less than one half** of the enrolled pupils were found to be present in school at the time of the first visit.

The fabric

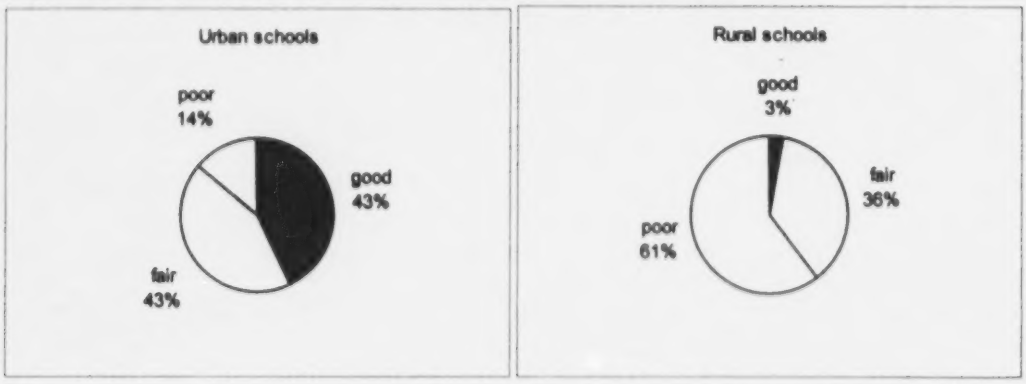
The average school had twenty classes, but only twelve classrooms, signifying that 40 percent of classes did not have their own rooms. There were several ways of coping with this serious shortage of facilities. Most often, classrooms were used for multiple classes (with as many as four classes being taught in a single space). In other schools, classes were taught outside. In a number of cases, especially though not exclusively in the south-east, a shift system operates, with different sets of pupils and teachers attending in the morning and afternoon.

In Aba North LGA, two administratively separate schools often operated from the same facilities. Golf Course Primary School I, for example, operates from 7.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., while Golf Course Primary School II operates from 1.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. While this system clearly had its disadvantages (teachers commented that children were less alert in the afternoons), and is in fact contrary to government policy, it does enable more children to be accommodated by the inadequate facilities. It also facilitates school attendance by children who work as domestic helpers in the mornings, and for this reason, the shift system is actually preferred by some parents and guardians.

Classrooms were not only insufficient in number but generally in a poor, and frequently deplorable, state of repair. This condition was clear to the eye, and was one of the most consistent themes of stakeholder commentary about the schools — the reports abound with reference to leaking or blown-off roofs, cracked and collapsing walls and floors, the absence of ceilings, and missing doors and windows. The ravages of wear and tear, storms, vandalism and theft have combined to reduce the country's stock of classrooms to a grievous state.

Urban school buildings were generally in much better repair than those in rural schools. Researchers classified the condition of infrastructure as 'good' 'fair' or 'poor', and the results are shown graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Condition of infrastructure: urban and rural schools*



The remainder of the schools' facilities and environment were in a similarly lamentable and run-down condition: far from being conducive to the task of education, they were often insanitary and unhealthy, and sometimes actually dangerous. Less than one in five of the schools were fenced: some were reported to have become thoroughfares for passenger and vehicular traffic which was both hazardous and eroded the compound. In one school, an abandoned construction pit constituted a real danger to children. Over 60 percent of schools had no toilet facilities at all, and even in those where there were latrines, these were generally inadequate in number and in a poor state of repair. Only twelve schools (22 percent) had a source of water, and only eight (15 percent) had electricity. Thirty-three (61 percent) had a playground. Seventy percent (thirty-eight schools) had a separate structure which served as an office. In only a few schools was the air of dejection relieved by trees or flowers.

The situation regarding school furniture and teaching materials was likewise distressing. The number of desks was generally quite inadequate. One school in Yabo with over 600 pupils had only 25 desks. In other cases there were none at all, forcing all of the children to sit on mats or the bare floor. In some schools, children provide their own desks and carry them to school daily. Not all schools had equipment even as basic as chalk-boards, let alone more sophisticated aids. Teaching materials — even basic textbooks for teachers — were in short supply. Two-thirds (thirty-five) of the schools had no library or library books at all.

Chapter 3

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Although the National Primary Education Commission has overall responsibilities for its administration, primary education remains the formal responsibility of Nigeria's 776 local governments. Funds for primary education come from the federal government's statutory allocation to local government councils. These are now deducted at source and passed to NPEC, which turns it over to the SPEBs and LGEAs to service the primary education system. Each local government council is headed by an elected chairman, with a Secretary as the senior administrator. Within this administration, the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) is headed by the Local Government Education Secretary (LGES).

As noted in Chapter 1 above, LGEAs are formally responsible for, amongst other tasks, the day-to-day running of primary schools in the LGA, the payment of teachers' salaries, the acquisition of materials and equipment for all primary schools, and the maintenance of primary schools.

Eighteen local government areas were sampled during the survey: in each, interviews were undertaken with the Local Government Education Secretary, the LGA chairman, three or more education officers (school supervisors), and other interest groups such as PTA federations and District Education Committee members.

Views of Local Government Education Secretaries

While acknowledging the difficulties which their areas faced, Education Secretaries also stressed the improvement in the timely payment of teachers' salaries since the 1980s, when teachers were often not paid. Discussion revealed four common and related themes underlying the challenges which they faced. These were the numbers and quality of teaching staff, management arrangements, school maintenance and supplies, and funding problems. These problems were sometimes exacerbated by the frequent creation of new LGAs by subdivision, through which new administrative units were formed, each requiring its own staff and facilities.

Numbers and quality of teaching staff

Many LGESs also complained of a shortage of teaching staff (this was particularly the case in rural areas): frequently, even where there are insufficient teachers, LGAs have enacted a freeze on recruitment. In other cases, there is an informal restriction of a political nature against recruiting from outside the LGA. Combined with the reluctance of many teachers to accept remote postings, this has led to a shortage of qualified teachers in many rural LGAs (see also Chapter 5). Some LGE Secretaries expressed concern not only about the numbers of teachers, but also at the quality of their training and their motivation.

Organizational constraints

The position of the LG Education Secretary is subject to competing claims and potential conflict. Like the Chairman and other members of the Local Government Education Authority, the LGES is appointed by the Chairman of the Local Government. However, under the NPEC Decree (93 of 1993), the LGEA reports to the State Primary Education Board (and through the SPEB to NPEC), rather than to the local council.

Funds from the Federal allocation to local government are deducted at source and passed to NPEC for payment of teachers' salaries and allowances. Thus, although the salaries of primary school teachers are paid from the LGA budget, local governments have no control over how this part of their allocation is spent and little say in how primary education is conducted. This situation has often resulted in the LGA chairman's feeling by-passed and has led to a distancing from primary school issues, even a degree of resentment on their part:

> 'The Local Council is of no help whatsoever. Local Government Chairpersons are angry with us saying we have taken all their money, so they don't care or worry about us.' (LG Education Secretary, south-south zone)

> 'Now that the councils feel that LGEAs are taking all of the money, they don't want to hear or know about their problems any more. Even when I appealed to them to reactivate the craft center used to teach basic skills to the pupils and students from the nearby college, they told me to get lost.' (LG Education Secretary).

Many LGA chairmen would like to see the financing of education returned to the local level. Since the Education Secretary can only recruit teachers with the approval of the LG chairman, and this is rarely if ever forthcoming, the resulting stalemate also has a bearing on staffing. One Education Secretary summed up the situation as follows:

> 'An Education Secretary has two bosses, the SPEB chairman and the LGA chairman. It's like a woman with two husbands: to please one you offend the other. It will be worse when [party] politics comes.' (South-east zone)

Maintenance and supplies

The provisions of the NPEC decree make maintenance an LGEA function. However, the research revealed that LGAs were rarely sent the capital allocation for school maintenance which was due to them. Thus, the SPEBs, in fact, remain responsible for such maintenance as is undertaken in primary schools.

Instances of refurbishment and maintenance by SPEBs/NPEC were encountered during the research, and NPEC has also introduced a program which will allow local communities to assist with repairs and maintenance. In general, however, maintenance and refurbishment undertaken under this system was found to be scattered and patchy and, many felt, arbitrary. Current procedures were perceived from LGA and school level as a bottle-neck, and schools in areas far from state capitals felt particularly unlikely to benefit.

A similar picture emerged regarding supplies. While LGEAs have statutory responsibility for the acquisition of materials and equipment for all primary schools, in practice, they function merely as a distributor of exercise books, chalk, instructional materials, etc. purchased by the SPEB. Frequently, we were told, these arrive late, as much as six or seven weeks into the school year.

LGEASs were mostly of the view that SPEBs should hand over functions of materials acquisition and school maintenance to the LGEAs, as mandated in the NPEC decree.

Funding constraints

The lack of funding for supplies, maintenance and supervision was a major problem at LGEA level. Once teachers' salaries and allowances and the running costs of the LGEA office were paid, little remained for buying equipment and supplies or ensuring maintenance. For example, 95 percent of the ₦ 1.4m allocation to Kachia LGEA went to pay its 809 teaching and 85 administrative staff. Only ₦ 67,000 remained to buy diaries, registers, chalk and dusters, lesson notes, exercise books, transport and maintenance for eighty-nine schools. This is equivalent to ₦ 752 per school (a school diary and register alone costs over ₦ 250).

The situation is thus a frustrating one for many LGESs. As one expressed it: 'They [NPEC and SPEB] only pay salaries. Other things that make teaching and learning meaningful are not there' (LG Education Secretary, North-central zone). According to another:

> 'The structure of NPEC/SPEB makes the Education Secretary a mere messenger distributing exercise books, chalk and instructional materials when these are available. He doesn't have the financial means to solve problems that may arise or that he may observe as he goes about his duty' (LGEA Education Officer, south-east zone).

Transparency of management of these funds was also felt to be lacking. According to a supervisor in Ogoja:

> 'A major challenge is ensuring that the funds available are properly utilized for the running of the schools in the LGEA. As of now, only the LGEA Secretary and the Accountant know about monies coming into the LGEA. When we prepare our itinerary, quite often the Secretary turns it down on the pretext that there is no money.' (LGEA Education Officer, south-south zone).

School supervision

Supervision of primary schools is the responsibility of LGEA Education Officers, also known as supervisors. There were, on average, seven such officers in the sampled LGEA offices. However, Maiduguri Metropolitan (north-east zone) had no supervisors at all; in Ilaje there was only one supervisor, and many schools had not been supervised for over three years. At the other extreme, Nasarawa LGA had twenty-four supervisors.

A supervisor is typically responsible for a cluster of about nine schools. The frequency of supervision visits to the sampled schools is shown in Table 3. Most schools — 87 percent — were visited at least once a term; half the schools in the sample were visited more than three times per term. In general, rural schools were visited somewhat less frequently than urban.

***Table 3:** Frequency of supervision visits to sample schools*

Zone	*Never*		*< 1 visit /term*		*1-3 visits /term*		*>3 visits /term*	
	number	*percent*	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*
Urban	3	*14*	-	*0*	5	*24*	13	*62*
Rural	2	*6*	2	*6*	15	*45*	14	*42*
All Schools	**5**	***9***	**2**	***4***	**20**	***37***	**27**	***50***

Source: Consultation surveys

Supervision visits were said to cover all aspects of the school, including teachers' performance, pupil's attendance and performance and school environment. Supervisors described their visits as of three kinds: comprehensive, problem-solving, and spot-checking. Comprehensive inspection was supposed to be carried out for each school once a term and to include checking school records, lesson plans, time books and time tables; checking levels of supplies and staff and pupil attendance. Supervisors also report that they advise teachers on their problems and act as mediators between school and authorities, and sometimes even between school and community. A supervisor in Yabo LGA, for example, described how he became involved in obtaining the cooperation of the community in maintaining children's attendance. Generally, however, supervisors did not routinely consult parents.

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In most cases, supervision reports were prepared, but in several areas the lack of stationery meant that there were no written records of supervision.

Interviews with headteachers confirmed this pattern of visiting by supervisors. Most headteachers said that they appreciated the supervision visits which they received from LGA staff, and found them helpful in maintaining standards and managing staff. The headteachers of several rural schools requested that such visits be more regular.

The main complaint from supervisors related to limited mobility. This was particularly restricting where distance or terrain made communication difficult, as in riverine areas. Public transport does not serve more remote areas, and it was often impossible to obtain a refund of fares paid. Only in one LGA (Ikwo) were supervisors paid a transport subsidy. Many supervisors were restricted by lack of transportation or transportation allowances to visiting schools close to their homes or the LGA headquarters. In Yabo LGA (northwest), it was LGA practice to assign the supervisors to schools near their home communities so that they can either walk to the schools or find local means of transport. However, supervisors working in their home areas were also thought less likely to feel in a position to make frank evaluations of schools.

Another constraint identified was that in some LGAs, supervisors were of lower rank than headteachers. Supervisors were also perceived as lacking training (they did not received any specialized training in supervision skills). Perhaps in part for these reasons, some supervisors felt that they were treated as mere messengers, and that headmasters did not pay them due regard.

Since in many areas monitoring forms are no longer provided because of the lack of stationary, supervisors either have to buy their own paper or do not produce a written report. Even where reports were produced, headteachers did not usually see them. However, as the northwest zonal report notes: 'all the same, we found that supervisors were responsive to management and schools and that they provided some useful feedback to management, school, and even the community'. It was more difficult to identify tangible instances of action being taken on the basis of supervision reports.

Supervisors had a number of suggestions for alleviating their problems. These included training, transport allowances, and introducing small loans to education officers to buy or refurbish motorcycles.

Conclusions

Consultations with education administrators and others at the local government level highlighted four main constraints to effective primary school management at LGA level. First, teachers were often are inadequate in numbers and training. Second, there was a perception that roles and functions were overlapping and not clearly defined. Current management arrangements led to tension and sometimes conflict between the LGEA and

the LGA, of which it was a part. Relations between the LGEA and SPEB were similarly characterized by a lack of clarity, the functions of the local government being apparently usurped by the state level. Third, resources were insufficient to enable the LGA to carry out its statutory responsibilities (under the NPEC decree) of supervision, supply, and maintenance of schools. Fourthly and finally, there was a lack of transparency and accountability, particularly regarding financial matters, at all levels.

Chapter 4

HEADTEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Background, working conditions, and so on

The headteachers of all sampled schools were interviewed. They were found, in general, to be a well-qualified and experienced group. Qualifications ranged from Teachers Grade II Certificate to Bachelor's degree level. Almost all had at least ten years of experience as primary school teachers prior to their appointment.

Almost all headteachers expressed enthusiasm and love for their vocation, to which most had devoted their entire careers. 'Teaching,' as one expressed it, 'helps lay the foundation of young people's lives'. As teachers, they felt they were 'helping humanity by training the young ones' (Headteacher, northwest zone). On the issue of compensation, however, dissatisfaction was quite widespread: while salaries were now being paid regularly, only one headteacher declared himself satisfied with salary levels, which others considered insufficient. Slow promotion was also a concern in some cases. Headteachers in some areas (e.g. north-central) also felt that training opportunities were insufficient. One headteacher declared himself completely dissatisfied with the inadequate facilities and teaching materials available, the poor remuneration and conditions of service, and the apathy of the local community, and had been seeking other employment. However, this was the only case there the frustrations of the system seem to have led to complete disillusionment.

Management role

Although the headteachers almost all undertake a certain amount of demonstration teaching for junior staff, and cover in cases of absence or lateness, their role is for the most part a management one. In larger schools they may be supported in this by one or two assistants. Administration is often facilitated by a committee system, through which responsibilities are delegated to teachers: in the southeastern schools, teaching activities are coordinated by unit heads, and duty rosters are prepared specifying the responsibilities of unit heads and teachers.

Headteachers chair staff meetings at the beginning and end of term, or more frequently as the occasion arises. They review class records, diaries and lesson notes, and schemes of

work. They are also responsible for assuring the attendance and discipline of pupils and staff. In one school in the northwest, the headteacher himself used to go to local markets in order to goad truants back to school. Headteachers complete Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (APER) for teachers. However, many felt that little account was taken of these reports in promotion and posting decisions.

Relations with Local Government and community

As head of the school, headteachers are responsible for managing its external relations, most importantly with the LGA administration responsible for the school, and the community which is its host. As noted in Chapter 3, most headteachers said they found LGEA supervisors' visits helpful. Their perceptions as regards other kinds of support from the LGA were more equivocal. Some schools had obtained financial support from their LGAs (for example, several schools in the northwest zone obtained support for Koranic and sporting competitions). In other cases, headteachers felt that more support could have been forthcoming. Uneasiness was also expressed regarding the transparency of finances at the LGEA level.

Headteachers almost all described their relationships with the local community in cordial terms. Frequently, the school was linked to the community by a whole network of institutions — the PTA, traditional authorities and old students' associations — as well as through personal contacts (school-community relations are described more fully in Chapter 8). Headteachers are ex officio secretaries of their schools' PTAs and were usually full of praise for these organizations, and for the moral and financial support which they provide.

Constraints

All headteachers complained of the poor teaching environment, especially of the dilapidated and decaying structures, which were usually insufficient to house the number of classes in the school. The inadequacy of facilities and especially the shortage of classrooms was generally identified by them as the most serious problem in their schools. In addition to the lack of classrooms, headteachers mentioned the dearth of other facilities documented in Chapter 2: potable water, instructional materials, office space, libraries, toilets and furniture for both pupils and teachers. One headteacher in the southeast wondered aloud what sense it made to insist on pupils' neatness and cleanliness when they would end up sitting on the floor. The fact that compounds were unfenced left them open to trespassers and pilferers. Teaching materials and furniture had been carried away at will, and traffic caused danger to children and damage to the compound.

Where they existed, headteacher's own offices were usually mere cubicles which also doubled as storerooms for books, perhaps furnished with a table and a chair or two. At Baale, the headteacher's 'office' was under a tree.

The lack of funds for the day-to-day management of their schools was another common lament of headteachers. In only one of the six zones were any funds provided to headteachers at all. This exception was the south-south zone, where some LGEAs had begun to give periodic imprests to headteachers for school administration. However, there are no clear guidelines for such imprests, and the sums given varied greatly between schools.

The absence of a sanctioned source of funds at school level means that even minor maintenance and supply problems have to be referred to the LGA headquarters. Given the lack of response which headteachers feel such requests meet, they are obliged to rely on the initiative of school and community to generate funds. Sources include the sale of handicrafts, weekly 'taxes' on food sellers operating in the school compound, the proceeds from school farms, and levies imposed on the PTA or school committee. One headteacher in Kano requests parents who seek transfer of their child to supply a box of chalk before the transfer letter is issued. Other examples are given in Box 3.

Box 3: Generating revenue at school

Parents of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGA pay an equipment levy of ₦15 per child in junior classes and ₦30 in the senior. Half of the funds are remitted to the LGEA, and the other half retained by the headteacher to meet day-to-day expenses in running the school.

The headteacher of St. Francis' School, Otukpo generated funds by renting out school buildings for social occasions such as marriages. She also charged food vendors a weekly fee for trading on the school compound. Funds generated in this way had been used to buy furniture and other equipment for the school.

Other concerns expressed by headteachers include the level of qualification and competence of their staff. As documented in the next chapter, there are many unqualified teachers in northern zones. Finally, a few headteachers said that they felt that the current curriculum lacked relevance.

Chapter 5

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

There are 424,000 teachers in Nigeria's public primary schools, and over 1,300 teachers in the schools surveyed. Including headteachers, over 200 of these were interviewed.

Teachers' qualifications

Table 4 shows the qualifications and gender of the national cadre of primary school teachers by zone, while table 5 gives the same information for the 18 sampled LGAs.

Table 4: *Primary school teachers by zone, gender and qualification (percentages) — All Nigeria*

Zone	*Graduate /NCE percent*	*Gd I, TCII percent*	*Other (<TCII) percent*	*Male percent*	*Female percent*	*Total percent*	*Number of teachers*
North-east	14	41	45	75	25	100	***52,559***
North-west	11	35	54	82	18	100	***72,510***
North-central	35	40	25	61	39	100	***85,567***
South-east	41	52	7	29	71	100	***61,655***
South-west	45	52	3	46	54	100	***84,527***
South-south	36	44	8	35	65	100	***66,997***
All Nigeria	**31**	**48**	**21**	**54**	**46**	**100**	***423,815***

Note: NCE = Nigerian Certificate of Education; GdI = Grade I Teacher Certificate; TCII = Grade II Teachers Certificate. According to the 1981 National Policy on Education, NCE was due to become the minimum qualification for primary school teachers in 1998. However, this has now been postponed.

Source: NPEC.

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Table 5: Teachers by qualification and gender (percentages) — 18 sampled LGAs

Zone	Graduate /NCE percent	ACE/GdI /TCII percent	Other percent	Male percent	Female percent	Total percent	Number of teachers
North-east	21	66	23	58	42	100	*2,513*
North-west	23	53	24	72	28	100	*1,614*
North-central	30	35	35	68	32	100	*2,701*
South-east	43	46	11	38	62	100	*2,189*
South-west	44	55	1	47	53	100	*1,643*
South-south	61	35	4	25	75	100	*3,581*
All Nigeria	**39**	**45**	**16**	**49**	**51**	**100**	*14,241*

Source: NPEC.

Qualified staff were not distributed evenly across the geographical and social landscape. Both tables highlight the high proportion of unqualified staff in the northern zones. Rural schools were also more likely to have a large proportion of underqualified staff. In three of the six sampled rural LGAs in the northern zones, over 40 percent of the teachers were unqualified, most of these having failed their Grade II certificate examination. As the zonal report notes:

> 'In general, obtaining the right caliber of teachers is a major problem, particularly in Rafi and Nasarawa LGAs where teachers are deficient both in absolute numbers and quality.'

Even where teachers had the required qualifications, the opinion was widely expressed by parents and headteachers alike that they were frequently poorly trained and motivated:[5]

> 'We have TC and NCE graduates who have studied under the distance learning program. By my estimation, however, they need retraining to be effective' (Headteacher, Obgia).

> 'A major problem that we have to contend with is the number of teachers who go through correspondence courses, sandwich programs and NTI products. It is as if they buy the certificates. There is no permanent mark that they have gone to enrich themselves — the general outcome of the country's undue attachment to paper qualification' (Adminstrator, Oredo)

Gender of teachers

Tables 4 and 5 also reveal that, while balanced nationally, the proportion of female to male teachers is regionally skewed. In the northern zones, there is a predominance of male teachers (only 4 percent of teachers in Jigawa State, for example, are women).

[5] See also the views expressed by parents, discussed in Chapter 7.

Within the northern states, the imbalance in the gender of teaching staff is most marked in rural areas. Primary schools in urban areas which are administrative centers may in fact be favored postings for female teachers who are the wives of senior officials. Thus, for example, 44 of the 55 teachers at St. Francis' Otukpo (north-central zone) were women. The low proportion of female teachers in many northern areas is of course a consequence of the lower educational status of women there. In limiting the exposure of girls to educated female role models, and reducing the willingness of parents to send their girl-children to school, it also tends to reinforce the social attitudes which underlie traditional conceptions of women's role and the restricted opportunities open to them.

In the south of the country, a gender imbalance of the opposite kind has been developing as men have deserted the teaching profession for more lucrative occupations, leaving women to dominate primary school teaching. The zonal report for the southeast notes that:

> 'Almost all the male teachers interviewed indicated that they would leave if they found a better paying job. As one teacher put it, "in the future, teaching will become a women's occupation." '

In some areas, it appears, it already has.

The dwindling presence of men in the teaching profession in the south of the country was regretted by parents. Male teachers were thought to provide good role models for boys. Some also felt that they were better able to maintain discipline, others observed that they also provided coaching for boys' sports.

Working conditions

Most teachers interviewed expressed themselves as being happy with their work, and, like headteachers, saw teaching as a vocation as much as a job, finding the challenge, stimulation and human contact which it provided intrinsically fulfilling. Others appreciated teaching because it gave them time to engage in other activities, such as fulfilling domestic responsibilities and studying for further qualifications, as well as pursuing the economic activities which have now become necessary for the survival of most teachers' families. However, without exception, teachers complained of the poor working environment and conditions which they faced. Salaries have been paid regularly since the re-establishment of NPEC in 1994, although there were complaints about arbitrary cuts in salary in one LGA, and late and irregular payment of salaries in another. Promotion was generally seen as granted when due, though sometimes teachers not indigenous to a local government area complained that they were overlooked. However, monthly salaries are very low, frequently amounting to as little as ₦ 1,500 per month. These figures compare unfavorably even with unskilled labor wage rates (see Box 4).

Box 4: Teachers' pay

Primary school teachers' pay in the northwest ranges from just over ₦ 1,000 for level 05, to less than ₦ 3,000 for level 09. Equivalent to under ₦ 50 per day, these rates are considerably lower than those paid for unskilled labor which are between ₦ 150 and ₦ 200 per day in urban areas, and ₦ 100-150 for rural farm work.

Mary, a teacher in the northwest, obtained her Grade II certificate in 1992 and started teaching at Primary School in 1996. She is also the financial secretary of her school. She is on Grade Level 06. She says that she enjoys her work in class, but is embarrassed when her friends who work at the local health center tease her about her meager salary. Nevertheless, she is happy with her promotion prospects, and plans to undertake further studies.

Source: Northwest zone report and field notes.

Teachers complained that supplements to which they were entitled such as housing allowances, hardship allowances, leave allowance and science teachers' allowances were not paid. There was also some resentment that teachers could not rise beyond Grade Level 12. This often places them substantially below civil servants with equivalent qualifications and experience. Some LGAs had sought to improve conditions by introducing incentives and allowances (e.g. linking in-service training opportunities to teacher performance, providing bicycle loans), but such measures do little to alleviate the underlying problem — the very low basic salaries which primary school teachers receive.

Faced with this severe decline in living standards, as well as their experience with extended periods when salaries were not paid and consequent industrial action, teachers have had to find other ways of supporting their families. Almost all of those interviewed had alternative sources of income, the most common of which were farming and petty trading. In the northeast, teachers even worked as laborers on the farms of their pupils' parents.

While teachers insisted that these secondary occupations did not interfere with their teaching, parents were of a different view, complaining that teachers were farming on a scale that affects their jobs. Parents also alleged that teachers sent pupils to their (the teachers') farms during the school period under the guise of agriculture training, or used them to run errands, hawk goods, or perform other menial jobs (see next chapter). Parents at one school in the southwest alleged that this happened as often as two days a week. In a northeastern school surveyed, pupils were apparently employed to move concrete blocks, and their daily wages (₦ 50) shared with the headteacher. While it was not clear whether these funds were put to school or personal use, such instances are clearly a misuse, and possibly an abuse, of children's time and labor.

Another important source of supplementary income for teachers, especially in urban areas and in the southern zones, was giving private tuition to pupils, for which parents paid a monthly sum (usually between ₦ 10 and ₦ 100).

A common complaint of teachers was the sudden and seemingly arbitrary transfers to which they are subject. These are often announced during the term and thus disrupted teaching. Both teachers and parents felt that the phenomenon of 'mass transfers' was used as a political and punitive instrument and ought to be checked.

In spite of their meager salaries and unpredictable postings, teachers clearly do place value in continuing employment in the public school system, and in the promotion, pension, and job security which accompany it. Few had definite plans to change their jobs, for example by joining the burgeoning private school sector:

> 'At least promotion prospects are good, and I will get a pension eventually. There is no prospect of a pension in the private school system. What is more, one's appointment can be terminated without cause.' (teacher, south-south zone)

A teacher in a private primary school in the southwest zone echoed this assessment, and was clearly anxious to move into the public sector:

> 'The proprietors of fee-paying private schools like ours here are shrewd entrepreneurs with their eyes trained on profit: they pay you the same salary, or a little more or less than your colleagues in the public schools, but make you work at least three times harder than them. What is even [more] annoying is that they keep threatening you with the sack all the time to ensure that you keep performing. Well, I don't blame them, they are capitalizing on the unemployment in the Nigerian economy. They know that for every teacher sacked at least four are waiting to take the job. When God answers my prayers, I will cross to the public sector where I, too, can enjoy light duty and job security.'

Teaching role

The consultations were not intended to make a technical or professional evaluation of teaching practice in primary school. In general, despite the difficult working conditions, the researchers' assessment was that teachers understood their roles and performed them within the limits of available resources and quality of supervision. Continuous assessment of pupils appeared to be a general practice, and there was evidence that it was being implemented at least in some form in forty-eight (89 percent) of the schools surveyed. In other cases, the necessary materials for administering continuous assessment were not available. However, some subjects were not being taught because teachers did not know how to teach them. There also appeared to be very little homework assigned, and while some teachers do set assignments in mathematics and English, there was little evidence that they review pupils' notebooks.

Teachers pointed out the constraints in their working environment. These included the lack of textbooks and teacher's guides, the inadequacy of classroom furniture, dilapidated

structures, insufficient classrooms and overcrowded classes, lack of instructional materials, poor general infrastructure, shortage of teachers in some areas, lack of sporting facilities, lateness or irregularity of pupils on certain days. In addition to improvement in teaching facilities, teachers expressed enthusiasm for further training opportunities.

Teachers, especially in the northern zones, complained that they found parents uncooperative in ensuring school attendance, especially in the cropping season and on market days, when in some schools scarcely one pupil in ten is to be found in school. Many feel that parents should take more responsibility for the education of their children. Sometimes, teachers complained, the reactions of parents made it impossible for them to impose discipline on children.

Teachers' status and relations with community

In the past, teachers were held in high esteem in their communities and regarded as role models. Often amongst the most educated members of their communities, their role extended beyond educating the young to being a source of knowledge and information about the wider world for the community as a whole. However, the deteriorating incomes and employment conditions of teachers have been accompanied by an erosion of their prestige. Once beacons of knowledge, they are now practically social marginals. In the southwest, it was reported that landlords advertise: 'House for rent: no teachers'.

A number of factors are responsible for changing attitudes towards the teaching profession. The prolonged period which primary school teachers suffered when salaries were not paid to them, the industrial action to which this compelled them, and government's clear disregard for their plight, initially elicited a degree of public sympathy for primary school teachers — some communities raised money themselves to pay their teachers throughout this period. In the longer term, though, these developments were unfavorable to their public image. Wider social forces are also at work: formal education is now more common, and is no longer a guarantee of lucrative, secure and prestigious employment. The association between education, wealth and social status has thereby been weakened. Developments in political culture have also seemingly undermined the social value ascribed to education at all levels and indeed to independent thought. Teaching is no longer an attractive career for the young, as the declining enrollment in teacher training institutions indicates. The painful and demeaning reversal of values and statuses to which teachers felt subject seemed to be symbolized above all teachers' being reduced to working as laborers on the farms of their pupil's parents.

Partly as a result of their changing status and in part a cause, the nature of teachers' involvement in the local communities has also changed over the last few decades. Some teachers live in the communities in which they work, and interact with them as fellow members of religious congregations and farmers cooperatives, as well as through common residence, and sometimes marriage. Their own children, too, often attend their schools. Increasingly, however, teachers live some distance away from their schools,

and told us that they have little contact with the community where they teach. This was particularly true in more remote areas. In the language of social capital, it could be said that for a number of reasons, including the declining sense of the social worth of the profession, the frequent and unpredictable transfer of teachers in and out of communities, the disturbance of teaching due to strikes and other disruptions, and greater social mobility in general, teachers and communities are less inclined to 'invest' in each other than previously. This changing pattern reduces the scope for both cooperation and accountability, and has been a factor in undermining the conditions for the 'coproduction' of education. As the next chapter shows, the sense of growing social distance between teachers and parents is often paralleled and reinforced by the social and economic polarization developing within communities themselves.

Chapter 6

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS

'Perhaps the country has got all of the educated people she needs for now, so there is no need to invest in the future' (Parent, northwest zone)

More than 540 parents were interviewed during the consultations, including members and officials of PTAs, community groups, and traditional institutions. This chapter considers their assessment of the values and costs of education, and of the performance of the current primary education system, together with their suggestions for improving it.

The value of education

In Nigeria, as elsewhere, parents want their children to attend school because of the prospects which education is felt to give for their future careers:

> 'I want them to have careers in the civil service, education, business, or the police. I don't want them to become farmers like me.' (parent, Rafi LGA).

For the most part, parents' aspirations for their children remain ones for which formal education was a prerequisite: medicine, the law, engineering, nursing, driving, clerical, police, soldiering, business. Significantly, teaching was very rarely mentioned by parents as a desired career for their children. Although military service seemed a popular ambition everywhere, in rural areas, aspirations were somewhat more realistic (motor mechanic, health worker, etc.). However, even the minority who expected their children to follow their own vocation in agriculture generally considered formal education still necessary: 'Even as a farmer he would need to read and write so that he won't be cheated' (Parent, Jos state).

Notwithstanding the general subscription to the value of education, not all parents equated education with formal schooling. A pastoralist parent commented as follows on the value of traditional knowledge:

'In its way, herding itself is an education. Children need to be given a means of livelihood from their youth, not when they are already too old to learn. Nothing is more worthwhile than herding' (Parent, Yabo LGA).

The costs of schooling

Although there are no official tuition fees charged for public primary education, parents are required to pay sundry levies to keep their children in school. Regular LGA levies ranging from ₦ 20 to ₦ 100 per pupil per term were current in most areas. Other ad hoc or occasional levies may be imposed for renovations or the provision of consumables (down to chalk), and for registration, examinations, handicrafts, sports, or the library. In addition, PTAs regularly levy contributions of up to ₦ 300 per pupil to fund their activities in support of the school, as well as the central PTA organization.

Most schools require that their pupils wear uniforms. Although not all enforce this requirement, others send pupils home if they are not wearing school dress. School uniforms cost around ₦ 450 each, and last about two years.

Expenditure on textbooks and stationery and other items (e.g. notebooks, pencils, pens, rulers, school bags, etc.) varied considerably. On average, parents in the northern zones said they spent just ₦ 160 on textbooks, and ₦ 800 in the southern zones. In many schools, parents simply do not buy books for their children. Most children have only one exercise book, which they try to use for all subjects. In the more prosperous southeastern zone, the typical pupil had three exercise books: one for English, one for mathematics, and a third for all other subjects (these other subjects are known collectively, for this reason, as 'note').

Most children questioned said that they ate at home before coming to school, but some parents have to provide their children with money for food or snacks (say ₦ 5- ₦ 10 per day). Most pupils interviewed lived within walking distance of the school. Otherwise, transportation money in urban areas may account for ₦ 10-20 per day.

Enrolling in extra lessons is surprisingly common, at least in the south and in urban areas nationally. In some instances, teachers gave such lessons free. Generally, however, parents were charged between ₦ 20 and ₦ 50, and occasionally up to ₦ 200, per child per month. One school apparently operated a semi-formal system of extra lessons in the afternoons, for which pupils were charged ₦ 2 per day.

Given the variation in circumstances, the average figure for parental expenditure on education is difficult to assess, and in any case tells us little. However, the data indicates that typical parents spend at least ₦ 1,000, and up to ₦ 2,400, per pupil per year to keep their children in public primary school. Expenditures were higher in urban than in rural areas. They were lowest in the northwest, and highest in the southwest and southeast zones. The payment of school expenses was generally considered to be the responsibility

of a child's father. However, especially in the southern zones, the mother could also be formally responsible, and in all areas, in practice, both partners and other members of the family (sometimes outside the household) contributed to school expenses.

Some parents said they would be willing to pay more if the quality of education were to be improved. They particularly wanted better-trained teachers and better classrooms. However, most parents seemed fatigued by the continual demands made on them for new levies, and were unwilling to perform any further a role which they considered to be rightly that of the government.

> 'The government says they are providing free education, yet they do not pay teachers properly, provide teaching materials, renovate schools or supply books. The earlier they concentrate on specific tasks and do them properly, the better for the system. We need to negotiate new arrangements so that we don't end up doing everything except paying teacher's salaries' (Parent, south-west zone).

The decision to educate

The decisions of parents to send their children to school are based upon a complex calculus of the costs and benefits of education, within which figure, in addition to the financial costs outlined above, the cultural value and economic returns ascribed to education, the opportunity costs of sending able-bodied children to school, and the social pressure brought to bear to educate them. Family relationships and stability also play a role:

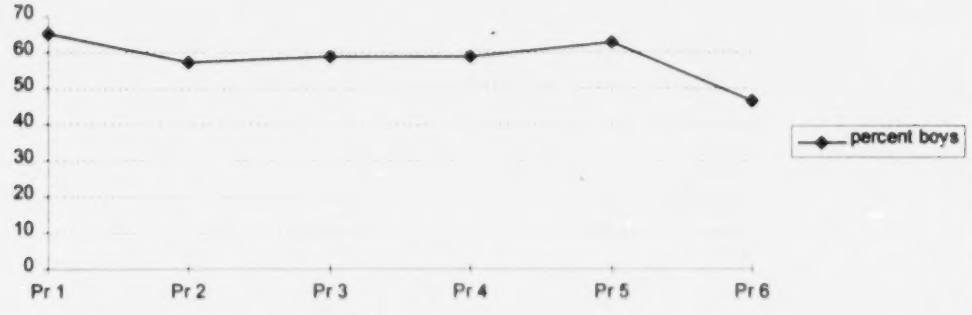
> 'It is my husband's responsibility to put children in school, not mine. Besides, we are always quarreling and fighting, and there is no time to discuss family matters' (Yabo LGA parent).

The outcome of this calculus varies between urban and rural areas and between the regions of the country, as well as with the gender of the child and the socio-economic class of the parents. It is reflected in the enrollment statistics presented in Chapter 2. Thus, in the northeast zone, it was clear that parents send children to Islamic schools not only because of the traditional, moral and spiritual values imparted there, but also because of the poor condition of most formal schools, and because western education is considered expensive. While the *mallams* who oversee the traditional Islamic schools are remunerated, this is on an occasional and flexible basis, and it is not necessary to supply children with uniforms, textbooks and exercise books.

Throughout most of the southern zones, the norm is to send all children, irrespective of gender, to primary school. In parts of the southeast, in fact, it is increasingly boys, rather than girls, who are missing from the classroom. This phenomenon, on which there has been increasing public discussion in recent years, is seen as a reflection of the predominance of commercial and business occupations in this zone, success in which, as the cases of many successful businessmen exemplify, does not necessarily require formal education.

Data from the LGAs and schools in the southeast, however, do not support the contention that the enrollment of boys in public primary schools is falling any faster than that of girls. The figures in Table 3 do not show any imbalance. To examine this question more closely, class-by-class data were collected from primary schools in Anaocha, a southeastern LGA where the problem of low male enrollment was said to be particularly acute. In fact this data shows (Figure 2) that the proportion of male pupils enrolled is actually quite high for the first five years of primary school, only falling below 50 percent in the sixth and final year, when boys' enrollment was found to be lowest in all schools. It appears, then, that low male enrollment is primarily a secondary school, rather than a primary school, phenomenon. However, the seeds of low succession may probably have been sown during the primary years.

Figure 2: *Percentage of male pupils enrolled by year: Primary schools, Anaocha LGA, Anambra State*



Parents' assessment of primary school performance

Parents were far from satisfied with their children's performance in school. Parental attitudes to schools were, to put it mildly, mixed. While a minority feel that schools are fulfilling their role and that their children are learning, most were painfully aware of a decline in educational standards. Literate, urban dwellers tend to be the most articulate, and also the most critical of their schools. As the report on the south-south zone notes:

> 'Many parents, particularly those not educated or with minimal education, leave everything to the teachers. They could not say whether all is well with schools or not. They assume that all teachers must be good, and could not say whether there had been changes over time. Other parents, the educated ones and others not so educated but 'exposed', are not satisfied with current services in the primary school system.'

However, as the following quotations demonstrate, condemnation of the performance of today's primary schools is widespread:

'The school here is gone. Very soon, no parent will send children there because there is no proper teaching. It is better for the children to learn how to farm and thereby secure a future, because now they are not learning anything. I don't regard any of the teachers as good — one is an alcoholic. Those teaching classes three to six should be teaching class one. The children are not getting anything, that's why the parents have withdrawn their children. Pupils in class 4 cannot read the alphabet or count up to a hundred. They hardly ever pass the college entrance examination. No-one from this primary school has ever gone to college. Many can't even write their names' (Parent, north-central zone).

'The changes have been monumental. Moral education is almost non-existent nowadays. The teaching of religion is completely neglected. There are no proper examinations, and pupils, even in the upper classes, can no longer read and write' (Parent, south-south zone).

'Primary education has witnessed a downward trend. In our days, I started writing letters to my parents from the time I was in Primary 3. Nowadays, many Primary 6 pupils cannot even spell their own names properly' (Parent, south-south zone).

'Standards have fallen over the years. Even Class 6 pupils do not do as well as class 2 pupils in the old days. Teachers are not respected. They are very poor and they cannot even get loans from community members any longer. Farmers are better respected. When it comes to marriage, nobody would like to give his daughter to a teacher. Materials and facilities used to be adequately provided by the government, but today the whole burden falls on parents. If it were those days, all of the parents would have removed their children to farm [under such conditions]' (Parent, north-east zone).

'In our time, pupils could read the Igbo Bible in Standard 1 and write letters at standard 3. When promotion was not automatic, children were expected to attain these standards before moving on the next class. Nowadays children can no longer write, or even read the clock [i.e. tell the time]' (Parent, catechist, and retired school teacher, south-east zone).

'We are always shocked when we are informed that pupils have passed a college examination — the same children who cannot read! It is magic!' (Parent, Nasarawa PTA, north-central zone).

Like other stakeholders, parents were unhappy with school facilities and their state of disrepair — blown-off roofs, incomplete buildings, makeshift and shared classrooms or teaching under trees, shortages of furniture, the lack of textbooks and instructional materials, even for teachers. 'Does this look like a school?' was a common exclamation.

'This is a model science school, but where is the equipment? As you can see, the lab is empty!' (Parent and PTA chairman, southeast zone).

Community members expressed broad sympathy for teachers and the difficult conditions under which they worked. Primary school teachers were seen as the foundation of

education. Parents considered that they were 'suffering', and should be more fairly rewarded with salaries, allowances and housing. However, it is clear from those quoted above that parents also feel that teachers themselves should bear part of the responsibility for the drastic declines in educational quality which they say the last few decades have witnessed. To begin with, teachers were not considered well trained:

> 'Many of the teachers are not qualified. Many themselves cannot write simple, correct English. How can they teach what they do not know? They should be taught first' (Parent, north-central zone).

> 'It is impossible to give what they do not have' (Parent, south-west zone).

Second, teachers' attitudes to work were generally judged unsatisfactory. They were said to report late and close early, and to follow other occupations during school time, even laboring on the parents' farms during working hours. Parents also complained that, even when teachers were on duty, children were left free to roam around and play during school hours. Box 5 illustrates the frustration of one parent consulted.

Box 5: A father's agony (extract from north-central zone report)

Mr. Ibrahim called in five of his children who had completed primary education at one of the sample schools: none of them could read or write. In the presence of the team, he challenged his 12-year old daughter, who completed primary school there, to write her name. Rather than face the shame, she ran away. In this way, his agony and loss of faith which he expressed in the school seemed justified: "My twelve year old daughter passed out of school without picking up anything. In my grief, the teacher appeared one day to say he had found a suitor for her. I told him to leave that to me as he had failed in his duty of teaching her."

Parents said that the lack of discipline in schools had increased. They felt that this was partly because teachers no longer lived near their schools, and hence had little interaction with the community outside school hours. Some also saw the lack of male teachers as the problem. (For their part, teachers blamed parents for taking offense when their children were disciplined.) Parents also lamented the declining emphasis on neatness and hygiene compared to earlier days.

Many parents, especially in the rural north, hardly visit their children's school. Some said that they did not feel welcome. However, if some parents felt uncomfortable visiting their children's schools, others said they felt more readily able than in the past to visit schools and express their opinion, even bringing teachers to task. The declining social status of teachers has possibly led parents to view them as being more approachable.

Trust between teachers and parents had been eroded by allegations that teachers had misused money collected by the headmaster, or raised by the community or PTA for

school use. Such allegations of embezzlement were quite common. Parents wanted school management committees to be established to ensure proper accountability.

Parents were less critical of the school curriculum. Typically, they said that the curriculum in use in school seemed to be adequate, because they had nothing to compare it with. Many were, however, of the opinion that it was overloaded ('too many irrelevant things so that the children cannot learn it well'). Some felt that the continuous assessment system did not give proper attention to children's actual knowledge because teachers awarded marks arbitrarily to pupils.

There were complaints about the disruption of teaching as a result of other government programs — for example, teachers are regularly withdrawn from duty to supervise or conduct elections, participate in surveys, or carry out censuses. In addition, schools are used for many civic activities such as community meetings, conventions and political rallies, often without regard to the school program and its activities.

Parents, especially in rural areas, would like to see more supervision of teachers, and a reduction in the frequency of transfers. Some parents had more specific suggestions. They wanted moral instruction to be introduced. Housing for teachers was advocated. In the southeast, extra allowances were suggested to encourage male teachers. Others wanted teachers to desist from bringing their children to school to be looked after. Another suggestion was that schools should go back to the old practice whereby pupils were not allowed into classes until their teacher arrived. This, it was felt, would embarrass teachers who came late.

Parents were less sympathetic towards the management of the primary school system than towards the teachers.

> 'The government has messed up [the schools]. They should help teachers or hand the schools back to missionaries. We don't want them handed back to LGAs' (Parent, south-south zone).

> 'Government should review teachers' salaries, provide books, chalk, renovate schools' (Parent, north-central zone).

> 'It is for the government to do it. We have many oil wells, and everyday they pump oil overseas without improving our welfare' (Parent, south-south zone).

One aspect of primary educational policy on which parents in all zones commented was the book policy. They were unhappy with the current policy of textbook rental (or at least with its implementation). Many parents said that they would rather buy books, even if they were expensive, than rent them (for one reason, they were afraid of the consequences should they lose the book). Many interpreted the 'not for sale' stamp on the front of the current editions as precluding any charge for the books and regarded the

school requirement of a rental fee with suspicion. In other cases, we were told that the books were not being distributed for other reasons:

> 'Sometimes the school stores or the headmaster's offices are burgled and the books stolen. To avoid these thefts, most headmasters keep the books at home and the children never see them. Hardly do the children know even the color of these books. The idea of keeping the books stacked at home or in the office makes no sense. Keeping the books is like keeping the children's intelligence in the teacher's cupboard. As far as I am concerned [the textbook scheme] is as good as not being launched. The solution is to sell the books outright to the children. If they are not enough, ask for more!' (PTA member and retired primary school teacher south-south zone).

From public to private education

The warmest praise that many parents could summon for their children's schools was that attending was 'better than staying at home'. One effect of the disillusionment of parents with standards in the public primary school system has been the explosion in private primary schools: 8,000 such schools with 2 million pupils were officially registered in 1995. Over 70 percent of these were in the southern zones of the country. These statistics (though they probably underestimate the actual number of private schools, even in 1995), suggest that at least 19 percent of primary schools, and 12 percent of enrolled pupils (and more in the south) are in the private sector.

The flourishing private education sector is not only a reflection of the state of public primary schools. It has also affected that system in direct and indirect ways. First, it has resulted in falling enrollment. In Aba North LGA, for example, there has been a dramatic fall-off in school population from 23,000 in 1991 to 15,600 in 1997. This decline was attributed by the LG education secretary to the proliferation of private schools.

More seriously, the fact that the more influential and articulate members of the community send their children to private school means that they no longer have a stake in the public system, and that community schools have lost their most effective local champions. As a parent in Kagia (north-central zone) put it:

> 'Only the children or the poor are in public primary schools now. The big men who run the schools have their children in private schools.'

Parents of children in the public system repeatedly voiced their resentment at those, including functionaries, educational administrators and teachers themselves, who sent their children to private schools and left the public institutions to decay. Many felt that, for this reason, private schools should no longer be permitted.

Conclusion

The following excerpt from the zonal report on the northeast brings together many of the themes of this chapter:

'Parents could not easily visit their children's schools to ascertain their progress. This, they said, was for lack of time. Sometimes, too, they feel that they would not be welcome in the school. Parents who themselves lack education noted that they would not be able to assess progress if the school work was shown them — they felt inadequate themselves. However, as one such parent noted in Yabo LGA, he is satisfied with the explanations that educated parents give, and, from that, he gains his own awareness of the progress of his children. All parents are aware of the lack of supplies, for example, chalk, dusters, etc., and facilities, but they feel unable to meet all the expenses of providing these and believe government could do more, if only parents will consider the responsibility of assisting. Some indicated that by being members of PTAs and paying their ₦ 20 levy, they are already making some contribution. However, some of the richer parents are willing to handle specific problems, and several examples were given to the LGAs — buying of first aid drugs, dressing, buying of boxes, chalk, repairing of classroom windows, doors, or even re-flooring classrooms. Indeed, parents who willingly gave up time to talk to us appeared to be the ones who made themselves accessible to the school and were willing to put their assets at the school's disposal. However, the problem which they identified, however, was the fact that society was changing. The social divisions between the "haves" and the "have nots" are widening. The display of opulence by the former make the latter more self conscious of their inadequacies and therefore unwilling to come together to rub shoulders with them. Parents insisted that the proliferation of private schools is in fact partly responsible for the near zero standards of the public schools. The rich parents' influence on the latter has been considerably removed. For this reason, the PTAs are not always financially viable. Some parents went as far as suggesting that the establishment of private schools should be discouraged.'

This passage captures well not only the views of parents, but the ways in which the changing social dynamics which underlie these perceptions influence the relationship between school and its client community, and in particular parents' ability to assess and influence school performance. First, whatever their level of sophistication, all parents are aware that something is wrong with the system: most visibly with the fabric of their schools, but, almost as tangibly, with their children's meager achievements. Second, parents are already contributing substantially to the upkeep of the schools, but do not feel supported by the government, which they see as having reneged on the social contract of UPE. However, the less educated, lacking the political and cultural capital to articulate their unease effectively, rely upon those who are more educated and socially better placed to keep a watch on pedagogical matters, as well as to provide financial support to keep the school in viable condition. But social change is reducing ties between social strata: the better-off mix less with poorer parents, and increasingly send their own children to private schools. The capacity of the community to present a common and convincing voice (the social capital which enables effective mobilization) depends, if not on homogeneity, at least on common interests and consensus. As these become eroded, the public sphere is losing not only the material support of the better-off, but also the prestige and networks of patronage which their social status could lend the community in its efforts to maintain and improve its schools..

Chapter 7

PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS

Reasons for enrollment/non-enrollment

One hundred and eighty pupils were interviewed across the country, individually and in small groups. Children of primary school age who did not attend school were also interviewed at home, on farms or in public places (markets, motor parts, etc.) during school hours.

Perceptions

Pupils see primary education as the basis of their future career. They also felt that it made them wise and useful to society, and that a person got more respect if they could speak English. Their ambitions for their careers were not markedly different from those which their parents had for them: to be nurses, teachers, doctors, business executives, police, soldiers, clerks, lawyers, engineers. They saw their schooling as being relevant to achieving their career goals.

Almost all children say they enjoy school, which gives them an opportunity, not only to learn, but to play with other children, and to escape domestic chores and strict parents. They told us that they liked their teachers and are sympathetic to them (some saying that the government should look after them well). In the southeast, children said that they respected their teachers for their attitude to work, their punctuality, regularity, and teaching abilities. Some teachers gave extra tuition without charge. Pupils did not like being beaten, especially arbitrarily. While they said that this usually only occurred after an infringement, some teachers were seen as floggers, beating without reason.

Mathematics, English, social studies, and science were favorite subjects. Children also mentioned other subjects which they would like to be taught: sewing, baking, cooking, car repairs, computing, typing, and French.

Children identified the same needs for their schools as other stakeholders: classrooms, desks, chalkboards, more teachers, better sanitation, availability of text-books and school libraries, though games facilities, and musical instruments for a school band also featured

high on their lists. In general, as the report on the northwest notes, their expectations were modest:

> 'The pupils themselves did not seem to hope for much more than the very basics, for example, some furniture to sit on, water facilities, and the availability of toilets on the premises. They were not so disturbed about their lack of books. It seemed normal for them not to have books' (Pupil, north-west zone).

Most children interviewed walk to school, and usually ate before coming to school, some going home to eat during the mid-morning break.

Most pupils work at home or outside before or after school. Hawking, porterage, and shop-keeping were the most common occupations in urban areas; farming and feeding and herding livestock in rural. Most, particularly girls, also performed domestic work (sweeping, fetching water, attending to domestic animals, fetching firewood, taking care of siblings), and both boys and girls in the north attended Koranic schools. Most do not do homework.

Non-attenders

Many children not at school blamed their non-attendance on the inability of their parents to pay the required fees and levies. Other blamed teachers' propensity to flog. Some found school boring, and preferred hawking, along with the prospect of an income which it brings (Box 6).

Box 6: Some non-attending children in the north

Nine children, five girls and four boys were consulted in the northeast. All of the boys said that they would like to attend school, but their parents would not send them because they could not afford the fees and levies demanded. Three of the girls, too, were interested in school, but said that their parents claimed that school 'breeds indiscipline and female disloyalty'. Although their parents wanted them to attend Arabic schools, the girls said that they preferred hawking to this, so that they could have saved some money by the time of their marriage. The two other girls said that they had no interest in attending school, because the teachers beat pupils. They preferred hawking. 'We want to become rich women', they said.

In Maidamashi (northwest), two boys, aged 7 and 9, working on a farm in a gang were interviewed. They get ₦ 35 per day or more harvesting ginger, depending on the quantity. They had never been to school and did not think they were missing much: 'Our parents are farmers and have not found it necessary to send us to school. Farming is a better occupation because potentially it offers a lifetime's livelihood.'

Ladidi Musa (north central) is 13 years old, and a Gwari speaker. She hawks food at Kagara, selling rice in the morning and kola nuts in the afternoon. She does not go to school: 'my parents did not send me to school, and I did not ask why. My brother completed primary school and went on to college. I look forward to getting married some day'.

Other children could not attend school because of particular family circumstances:

> 'My brother said I should not go to school. He didn't give me any reason. Neither did I ask for an explanation. My father is dead and my brother is now my guardian. It wasn't my decision, he gave me those instructions. I produced 400 yams last year, and brought clothing with the proceeds. I plan to stay a farmer, marry, and raise children. I will send my own children to school, so that they can read and write' (Nasarawa child).

Chapter 8

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Chapter six reported the views of individual parents, documenting their growing exasperation with the condition of primary schools. The present chapter considers the ways in which the relationship between school and community has evolved and the collective actions through which parents and communities members support their schools. The use of the term 'community' does not, of course, imply the existence of a geographically defined and homogenous social grouping around each school. The reality was rather one of a diversity of institutions — village councils, PTAs, women's groups, religious congregations, age grades — which interacted with their schools with varying solidarity, energy and effectiveness.

In the past, the attitude of communities towards their schools has been one of support and succor. Most schools in the era before UPE, and many since, were established and constructed through community initiative and effort, without any support from the government. The fates of school and community have inevitably been intertwined, the establishment of educational facilities being seen as one of the most effective routes to community 'upliftment' and local advancement. Schools also serve as community centers, and a site for ceremonies and meetings, especially in rural areas. In the uneasy triangle of relations between government, school and community, government is seen as a kind of distant and unpredictable stepmother, while school and community are locally present, and, to a degree, mutually accountable. Communities have repeatedly shown their commitment to schools by assisting in solving problems of all kinds. It therefore seems natural to depict the relationship in terms of flesh and blood:

> 'The community is like a father to the school. Under the aegis of the Community Development Committee (CDC), the community meets with the school authorities from time to time to deliberate on possible solutions to problems besetting the school' (PTA member, south-south zone).

As we shall see, the material and managerial problems identified by communities in the consultations and the actions which they have taken to solve them were quite similar countrywide. However the nature of the connection between school and community, and the idiom within which it is expressed, varied according to the local social structure and culture. Thus, for example, the governance of a rural school in the southwest reflects the traditional political relations of its host communities:

> 'The primary school at Baale was founded by seven communities coming together. The PTA executive consists of one representative of each village. The representative briefs the traditional ruler about goings-on at the school, and if necessary, the ruler mobilizes his subjects to act promptly.'

Similarly in Ikwo LGA, communities:

> 'saw their schools as their property and therefore took special care of them. In fact, there is a healthy inter-community competition going on with each community wanting its school to excel' (south-east zonal report).

In communities in Ikwo LGA and elsewhere, social solidarity was such that the interests of parents were considered to coincide with those of the community as a whole. At Ndufu Echara village, for example, the PTA school development levy for the community primary school is binding on all adult members of the community, whether or not their children attend the school. According to a community leader:

> 'You may not be a child's biological parent, but you are his parent all the same if you are an adult from the child's community.'

The arrangement also serves to discourage parents from sending their children to schools outside the community, a practice against which some communities impose direct sanctions.

In urban areas, it was more difficult to talk about a school community: parents were involved only in the schools which their children attended. In general, parental involvement was less in urban schools than in rural. However, this was not always the case: communities in urban Kano, for example, provided considerable support for their schools through local Neighborhood Education Committees and Boards of Trustees.

Parent-Teacher Associations

PTAs in their modern form date from the 1970s, subsequent to the government takeover of schools. However, some body representing the community, such as a school committee or religious congregation, almost always predated the establishment of formal PTAs. PTAs were found in most, though not all, of the schools sampled. Where they existed, they were normally the main point of contact between parents and the school, and were often a major source of moral and material support for the school. Most PTAs were active in bringing together community and school, although the level of parental participation varied. Box 7 gives a sense of the activities of PTAs encountered by illustrating two contrasting, but fairly typical, cases.

Box 7: School, community and PTA: two contrasting cases from Cross River State

Ogboja **is a relatively prosperous farming and marketing community on the Ikom-Ogoja highway. In Ogboja, it was commonly said that "the school belongs to the community". The PTA for Government Primary School, Ogboja, which has its origins in the 'school committee' established in 1954 LGA, is considered to be the agent of the community.**

In the past, the PTA has donated tables, stools and chairs, as well as providing other support. If the PTA cannot deal with a matter itself, it is brought before the traditional ruler and the community. Recently, for example, there had been a rash of thefts of school furniture, allegedly by students from the neighboring Technical College. This was brought to the attention of the palace, and it was decided to construct desks which could not be removed from the premises so easily. The PTA levied ₦ 50 for each pupil, and a contract for ₦ 24,000 has been awarded for the manufacture of the desks. The most recent meeting of the PTA, held two weeks prior to the researchers' visit, had been attended by the LGEA Secretary and community leaders. Discussion centered on a ₦ 20 "Education Levy" which the community thought was being collected by teachers illegally. The Secretary read out the circular from the Ministry of Education sanctioning the levy, and the community agreed to pay. However, they made it clear that in their view the levies were becoming oppressive: over the previous year there had already been many, including, in addition to the new tax, a local PTA levy of ₦ 50, a national PTA levy (₦ 20), a library levy of ₦ 10, exam levies and a sports levy (₦ 10).

Oloibiri **(Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa State), has a claim to fame as the site of West Africa's first oil find, but there is still no tarred road linking it to the LGA headquarters, and the primary school is in a state of disrepair. There are only six classrooms and sixteen teachers for its thirty-one classes, so that children are sent home when rain threatens. There are 50 desks for over 1,100 enrolled pupils. There are no toilets, and the school field has been taken over by a cassava farm. The headteacher's house on the compound is abandoned, and teachers live far from the community and have to walk long distances every day to get there. 'Teachers do not go to school except when it is time to receive salaries,' one community member alleged. The community itself was riven by conflict. At the time of the visit for the consultations, a recent assault and resulting death had led to turmoil, and many were reluctant to talk to the researchers. One respondent claimed: 'Truancy by teachers causes instability in the running of the school. The teachers give remuneration as an excuse.' Another told us: 'The primary school has no PTA. There is supposed to be a school committee, but it is moribund. There is therefore no organ to question the headmaster on how the levies are decided, how much was realized and used for what! The major problem with the school is that there is no link between the school and the community'. The previous headteacher had recently been transferred, and his replacement was not prepared to comment.**

Activities of PTAs

Enrollment and attendance

PTAs are active in many fields. One of the most important is to assist in promoting school enrollment and attendance. In Ikwo LGA, community members accompany the headteacher on school recruitment drives. In this, PTAs function alongside other local

organizations. Box 8 gives an example of the role of traditional authorities in the mobilization of communities in the north-central zone.

Box 8: Traditional authorities promote primary school enrollment (Rafi LGA, north-central zone)

Before the start of the school year, the Emir of Kagara and other traditional rulers meet with the LGEA secretary. The projected enrollment for the year is discussed along with current retention performance. Enrollment figures are shared with all communities in the catchment areas. The community quota is passed on to the *mai ungwar*, or ward heads. Each ward head conducts a census of his community and obtains information about the number of school age children due for enrollment or who might have withdrawn from school. The families are then approached. The headteacher is therefore required to liaise with the ward head and follow up with visits to individual families to ensure that parents send their children to school:

"We go to the Emir, who calls the chiefs (ward heads) who work with the headteachers to encourage parents to bring their children to school. At the beginning of each school year, each ward head has a quota of pupils to bring. As the closest structure to the community, the ward heads know who has school age children."

Communities thus mediate between parents and school and encourage parents to enroll their children. As one parent put it: "the ward head asked me for school age children [to enroll in school], and I gave one".

In both Ikwo and Anaocha in the southeast, some communities have imposed sanctions on parents who withdraw their children from school. In Ighiwiyisi primary school, Edo state, the PTA made it mandatory for children attending neighboring schools to withdraw and bring them back to the local school, or face a penalty. Otabagi, a riverine community in Bayelsa State, took similar steps during the fishing season. At Igodor (Cross River State), parents of children who are absent from school for more than two weeks were summoned to the school by the PTA and fined.

PTAs may also be a source of arbitration or mediation in cases of differences between teachers or parents, or intervene in cases of indiscipline of teachers or children. They are engaged in many other efforts to improve school performance, attendance, and punctuality, including induction programs for teachers newly posted to the school, regulating the use of school facilities by outside groups, and organizing and sponsoring competitions.

Infrastructure and materials

Schools depend increasingly on PTAs for the funding of repairs, renovations, and even the construction of classrooms, as well as the provision of materials and many other needs. According to a headteacher:

> 'There is no way any headteacher can survive without the support of the PTA. They do everything for us — you name it — buildings, renovation, chalk, even transportation to take the children on outings' (Headmaster, southwest zone).

The instances of construction, repair of roofs, doors, windows, desks, and other equipment encountered in the consultations were too many to enumerate, though a number are mentioned elsewhere in the paper. Most communities donated the land on which their schools stand. Some offer rent-free accommodation to teachers; others have built houses for them. PTAs had even provided textbooks for teachers, and made up their salaries when these were short. A number of communities employed security guards for the school premises, and some have taken on unemployed school graduates as teaching assistants.

> 'We set up a school committee which serves as a link between the community and the school. If the school authorities think the school needs anything, the headmaster contacts the school committee, which reports to the community for appropriate action' (Traditional ruler, south-south zone).

PTAs were unhappy with the way in which government contracts for school construction and repairs were awarded without consultation with the community. They felt that because of their lack of involvement, the resulting work was often shoddy. Community members believed that they could do the work better themselves, and should at least be involved in the monitoring of contractors and be responsible for signing a completion certificate.

Resource mobilization

The PTAs usually raise funds by levying parents. Such levies were usually raised on an occasional basis. In some instances (e.g. Ikwo LGA), communities cultivate school farms and give the proceeds to the school for rehabilitation, maintenance or construction. Communities also take responsibility for some maintenance tasks, for example clearing the school compound at the beginning of term.

Parent-Teacher Association problems and suggestions for improvement

PTAs encountered tended to face a number of common problems. Most fundamentally, dependent as they are on the community's management and financial resources, their means are limited. It is thus those communities whose schools are most in need of additional resources that are the least able to mobilize them. In rural areas, circumstances such as crop failure may render a whole community unable to contribute to school funds. However, as the neglect of public services continues, PTAs are increasingly faced with the necessity to undertake major repairs and capital works on their schools which exceed their ability to fund and manage.

While most PTAs held at least one meeting each year for all members, and several for their committees, not all held regular meetings, and attendance was sometimes low. PTA

officials often mentioned the difficulty of getting parents to attend meetings and to pay levies, as well as of obtaining a response to directives from the local government and state authorities (this complaint is itself indicative of the conception which administrators PTA officials have of the role of PTAs). Parents in the northwest said they felt that the PTAs' suggestions were ignored. Some found bureaucratic procedures, for example, those surrounding the setting of PTA levies, to be needlessly cumbersome, deterring the raising of money by the associations. Sometimes there was conflict over use of resources, and, as noted in Chapter 6, the alleged embezzlement of PTA and community funds has been a frequent cause of tension between parents and teachers.

It was not always easy to gauge how representative PTAs were of the general community. Like any voluntary organization, PTAs include the more public-spirited and committed, and not all parents were equally informed, or enthusiastic, about their activities. A minority of parents did not seem to feel involved and did not know who the committee members were: they complained about the irregularity and infrequency of PTA meetings and the frequency of levies, and claimed not to know what was being done with the money collected, receipts for which were often not forthcoming.

Teachers were for the most part full of praise for the work of PTAs in repairs, renovation, purchase of supplies, etc. and for their contribution towards ensuring that pupils and teachers work together in a safe and friendly environment. Teachers in north-central, however, lamented the lack of well-organized PTAs, claiming that they met irregularly and were poorly attended. Likewise in Kachia LGA:

> 'Headmasters do not always refer cases to PTA or community leaders, except when they think the latter can actually help. In Kachia, the lady headteacher noted that she had occasion to call on the community leader to assist, but the response was often mere platitudes' (northwest zonal report).

PTAs, like parents, had much to say on the condition of schools. Their suggestions for improving school management were also similar to those of parents (as discussed in Chapter 6). They included the following:

- Government should provide instructional materials;
- Standardized exams should be established (equivalent to the former FSLC Examinations);
- The transfer of teachers should be less frequent and take place only after the end of the school year;
- Incentives should be provided to encourage male teachers to remain in the profession (southeast and south-south zones);
- District Education Committees (DECs) should be more active;
- Communities should be involved in project planning, execution and monitoring (in particular, no projects should be accepted until members of the

community have signed a certificate of completion so as to eliminate substandard jobs).

Other community associations

As already suggested, PTAs are often only one strand in a web of organizations and institutions which bind school and community. The membership and functions of these organizations frequently overlap, especially in rural communities. In some communities, the PTAs formally report to the traditional assemblies on a regular basis. Similarly, other local institutions — religious congregations, age grades, migrants' associations, town improvement unions, farmers' cooperatives — play important roles in support of schools. One headteacher told us that he preferred to work through the local church, of which he was a member, rather than through the PTA. Working with the latter, which was subject to the surveillance of the LGEA staff, could at times be a complicated affair. Associations of alumni seemed to be less active than community-level organizations. Although old boys and girls played active roles in community associations and the home-town unions of migrants, some communities expressed disappointment that their successful sons and daughters did not do more for their former schools. Individual benefactors also played a role in supporting schools: in Agulu (southeast zone), the proprietor of Bekk's biscuit factory had constructed a five-classroom block for the Central School, and refurbished all of the existing buildings in the school as well as the sports field. In the northwest, it was recorded that richer parents were willing to handle specific problems — buying first aid equipment, boxes, chalk, repairs to classroom windows, and even the reroofing of some buildings.

As communities and PTAs find themselves drawn more and more into the maintenance of public primary schools, they have in some cases been able to forge constructive relationships with government to complement their efforts. The Partnership in Improvement of Primary Education in Benue State, described in Box 9, is an example of this.

Box 9: Complementing community efforts with public funds: the Partnership in Improvement of Primary Education in Benue State

Benue State's Partnership in Improvement of Primary Education (PIPE) is a scheme for promoting innovative ways of supporting community involvement in primary education. Interested communities initiate the project and approach the SPEB through the LGEA for assistance. After SPEB and LGEA representatives have reviewed the proposal with community representatives, assistance is normally provided in the form of building materials; the community contribution takes the form of labor and locally available materials. Through PIPE, thirty-four schools and communities were assisted in Otukpo LGEA alone in 1995. Over ₦1 million was disbursed by SPEB for the construction of schoolroom blocks, offices, and stores.

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More often, however, attempting to bridge the ever-widening gaps left by the deficiencies of the public service has placed an increasing burden on communities to undertake tasks which are beyond their financial and technical means. As Box 10 illustrates, these circumstances may engender tension and resentment on the part of the community.

Box 10: PTA, community and government in Ukpe (south-south zone)

St. Charles, Ukpe **was founded in 1953 and built by the community and the Catholic church. It consists of two cement-block buildings, providing eight classrooms for the school's eleven classes, and a third, incomplete structure. The original PTA fell into desuetude many years ago (nobody seemed sure when), but was revived in 1980 at the initiative of two members of the community, Messrs. Emmanuel Ogar and Peter Oshelebe. Since then, it has been able to raise funds, through a levy of ₦ 10 per child, to pay for the repair of broken desks, digging pit latrines, and providing a school sign-board. Another portion of the funds was used to pay for the World Bank project books supplied to the school. The PTA also replaced the roof of the school's main building when it was blown off during a storm.**

The traditional ruler of Ukpe, himself a retired school principal, showed us around the school:

'This building is now the third of its kind built through communal labor on the same spot. Two earlier attempts did not survive the elements. The only outside [i.e. government] assistance we got is that UPE building which was abandoned uncompleted about five years ago, although the community had provided free labor and contributed materials. In spite of all that, the contractor abandoned his job and absconded.

'Government should supplement [the community's efforts] with provision of facilities and instructional materials. Otherwise, I don't know whether Government is trying to make it a rule that a horse that has accepted to go to water should be drowned. This community is interested and contributes to the educational growth of the area. But government does nothing to encourage us. You have seen for yourselves. There are no doors or window shutters. You have rough blackboards. The floors are worn out. There are too many levies in school nowadays, and parents can no longer understand the reason. In some cases, when the monies are collected, no-one knows where they end up. We do not feel the impact, but we are made to contribute again and again. [...] There is a total failure generally, total laxity in the approach to work in all our schools'

The traditional ruler wanted to have teachers of local origin transferred to other areas: 'Because staying at home they have more time for their farms than the work of teaching pupils in their care.'

Activist Parent-Teacher Association management

Most of the cases discussed here show the community acting as a safety net — maintaining a service whose condition often seems to be one of crisis or imminent collapse — rather than an active determinant of the direction and management of their schools. As the last two cases to be considered here illustrate, community involvement can sometimes take a more assertive turn (Boxes 11 and 12).

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Box 11: ECWA Primary School, Kachia LGA, Kaduna State

The Evangelical Church of West Africa Nursery and Primary School was established in 1984, after parents 'had become worried about the falling standards of education, but their hands were tied when it came to making contributions to the public schools, since the final decision and policy making powers lies with an unseen government. It was this that prompted some of them to withdraw their children from the public schools and enroll them in the ECWA nursery and primary schools' (zonal report).

There are 120 pupils, 20 to 30 per class. The children are all Christian, and most are members of the ECWA church. The headmistress is a dedicated young graduate and member of the ECWA congregation who was teaching at a public secondary school when the head of the church appealed to her to become headmistress.

The school has a governing board selected jointly by the church authorities and the PTA. The board makes decisions on school finance, policy, employment of teachers, and physical development of the school. The PTA is well organized, and through it parents were formed into groups which took responsibility for the construction of the main block of classrooms. Parents also help to maintain the facilities (a group were clearing the compound of weeds when the team first visited).

The fees are ₦ 400 per term, sometimes supplemented by offerings from the church congregation. There is no support from any external source. For several months in 1996, some parents could not pay school fees, having lost their jobs during a government retrenchment exercise. Teachers had to go without salaries for nearly a term.

The school uses the a phonetic reading and writing method adopted by the ECWA church, headquarters in Jos. The Headteacher was amongst the first trained at the ECWA church headquarters in Jos. It uses thirteen modules, in English, Social Studies, etc. with biblical themes. During the first two years, all the pupils from years 1 to 4 were grouped into a single class, ACE I: those who did well were promoted to class 5, others continued to ACE II. The timetable of the school had to be changed to accommodate this method, and the school now observes its own hours and holidays. Attendance is good (95-100 percent), as is retention. The children had their own books, and showed good reading ability.

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Box 12: Nizzamiya Primary School, Yabo LGA, Sokoto State

Yabo's Nizzamiya school is located in the center of town, sharing its premises with a Bank and part of the local government offices. It has almost 1,500 pupils, all Muslim, and mostly from the immediate neighborhood. There are thirty-three teachers, five of them women. Classes are large (averaging about eighty pupils). As there are only ten classrooms, eight classes are held under trees. The buildings (two blocks of five classrooms) are constructed of concrete blocks. However, doors, windows and ceilings were not in good repair, desks were in very short supply, and other furniture was inadequate and battered. Those taught outside sat on mats or on the ground. There are no latrines or running water.

The Headteacher has two deputies, one to supervise core subjects, the other Islamic subjects. The school teaches Islamic subjects (Koran, the Hadiths, Tajmid, Tawhid, Arabic, etc.), alongside the usual subjects taught in formal schools. Some instructional material was available, mainly for the Islamic subjects, though little for formal school subjects.

Concerned about declining standards, dwindling attendance, and low teacher morale since the school came under government management, the community established a task force of community and PTA members in order to halt the trend. Parents and others raised ₦24,000. The task force liaised with the LG Education Authority, then petitioned the Chairman of the LGA, and obtained an initial grant of ₦78,000 for the purchase of Islamic textbooks. The parents also got the local government to pledge ₦1,000 per month. An experienced headteacher was transferred to head the school. Enrollments began to increase, and one year now has five streams. The school week was changed to Saturday – Wednesday. The new executives of the PTA are mostly young parents who wish their children to have an Islamic education, but also to enjoy good employment prospects. Parents no longer have to enroll in two separate schools for this. The school receives a regular subvention through the state through the Islamic Education Board.

Repairs and maintenance have been undertaken, desks and benches, doors and windows are being repaired. A speech and prize-giving day has been organized. Children's uniforms have been changed, and a new school badge introduced. The PTA has also lobbied for more rooms within the compound to be used as classrooms. PTA has also linked the school with teachers colleges to send students on teaching practice to Nizzamiya. Members of the PTA pay unscheduled visits to the school to ensure that all is going according to plan. Extra teaching is offered for pupils in higher grades. Parents refer to the school as 'our' school.

Enrollment has increased dramatically within the last two years, from a few hundred to over 1,500. There are five streams of 50 children in class 6 alone, and the school is becoming the largest primary school in Yabo LGA. Attendance has also radically improved. The children were well dressed, and could respond to questions in English, could read Hausa, and knew some Arabic.

The school was runner up in Maryam Abacha Schools Competition (the winner was also a Nizzamiya school). Two of their final year pupils were selected to participate in the exchange program of secondary school in Northern Nigeria - going to Yobe and Kogi states. All of the final year pupils passed the entrance examination for Junior Secondary School.

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These two schools differ in important respects. ECWA is a private school, and Yabo's Nizzamiya school is public. ECWA is Christian; the Nizzamiya, Muslim. However, on closer examination, it is apparent that the two communities are seeking to solve a common problem in similar ways: the common thread is one of the re-assertion of parental values and control in schools within a religious idiom. The zonal report for the northwest comments on this phenomenon as follows:

> 'The drive by religiously inclined people to establish or re-establish primary schools with frank religious learning is indicative of an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the decadence of the nation's economic and social life. The apparent if not palpable lack of morality, accountability coupled with the levity with which public affairs, economic activities and especially business are treated, dictates that some action be taken. Education of the young is deemed an appropriate point to start. Its relevance cannot be understated [...]. Government schools fail to transmit moral values. The belief underlying the drive to make an input into primary education is that living by religious standards is far better than living by the man-made ethics prevailing in Nigeria today. Training the child in good living and giving him standards set by religion and living by them will have a beneficial effect on public life since one's private life will be set in order. People will do what is right before God — conduct themselves honestly in all things. The religious schools are geared towards setting a good example.' (2:69-70).

Nizzamiya schools date from the 1960s, and were established under tutelage of Sir Amhadu Bello, the first premier of Northern Region, and Ahmadu Danbaba, the Marafan of Sokoto.[6] They are found throughout the north on Nigeria, but are concentrated in the Sokoto area. The schools represented a conscious attempt to break the stigma attached to western education in the north by developing a curriculum combining Islamic studies with that of the formal public schools.

The Yabo Nizzamiya school PTA is dominated by relatively young men who value the benefits both of formal education and religious training, have managed to reconcile the two (although differences of opinion do remain among parents as to the relative emphasis which should be given to each). At the same time, the PTA has been able to forge a partnership with government, while re-establishing substantial control over the school. While its facilities remain modest and undeveloped, it appears to have started on a path to revival. The ECWA school has imported its own curriculum and teaching methods. Interestingly, both schools have chosen to express their autonomy by revising the scheduling and timing of their classes, a measure which would appear to have symbolic as well as practical significance.

These cases illustrate several important points. First, popular dissatisfaction with current educational services is an aspect of a wider disenchantment with the current norms and

[6] Nizzamiya schools take their name from the medieval university founded at Baghdad in the eleventh century.

standards of the public service and with prevailing social and moral attitudes more generally. Second, local communities can still be a powerful force in reversing declining standards through active management of their schools: raising educational quality, improving facilities, increasing enrollment and attendance, and adopting curricula more appropriate to local needs. Third, the fragmentation of community has led to the need to draw upon other sources of social capital to provide the necessary basis of trust and accountability. Hence the fastening, in both of the cases considered here, on to a sense of religious, rather than geographical, community.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the findings and recommendations of the consultations as developed during the zonal and synthesis workshops. It concludes by assessing the social processes underlying changing relations between school and community.

Findings

Parents, teachers, headteachers and educational administrators shared in a general perception of declining standards. The constraints identified can be grouped under six heads.

School and community

The consultations revealed a generally high, though varying, level of participation by groups such as the PTA, school committees, CBOs, and individual community members in primary education. Such groups make substantial contributions to their local schools through the construction of school buildings, repairs and maintenance, the provision of furniture and instructional materials, and security. In some cases, communities are also involved in promoting the enrollment and attendance of pupils, and have an input, although a limited one, into the management of schools. However, PTAs, school councils and CBOs are faced with multiple and frequently overwhelming demands, and their role vis-à-vis other stakeholders in the management of primary education is not well defined. In some cases, PTAs suffer from weak accountability and transparency.

Staff conditions and training

Most teachers and headteachers were committed to their vocation, and basic salaries were now being paid regularly. However, extremely low remuneration, poor working conditions and inadequate facilities have inevitably eroded motivation and satisfaction. Many teachers do not have the minimum qualification for primary school teaching. Further, the training of those who are qualified does not always seem appropriate to the conditions which they face. In some areas, there are serious gender imbalances in staff cadres, reflected in the shortages of female teachers in much of the north of the country and of male teachers in parts of the south. Teaching is further disrupted by frequent and

wholesale staff transfers. All of these factors have contributed to the declining prestige and status of teaching as a profession, and low self-esteem on the part of teachers.

Infrastructure and facilities

The educational environment is not conducive to learning, pupil safety, security and health. Classroom space is inadequate, meaning that children are either instructed in the open air or share classrooms with up to four other classes. Such classrooms as are available are generally in a poor state of repair. There is little or no funding to meet maintenance or running costs, or to obtain supplies of instructional materials and other educational inputs. Schools lack offices, desks or other furniture, and recreational facilities, and have few or no toilet facilities.

Instructional materials

Teacher effectiveness and student learning is further limited by:

(i) the inadequate supply of materials, especially textbooks;
(ii) frequent changes in recommended textbooks;
(iii) the current text book lending policy of the World Bank-supported Primary Education project, which parents find unacceptable; and
(iv) the late supply of record books.

Enrollment, attendance and retention

The study found regional imbalances in enrollments, with lower enrollment in the northern compared to southern zones, particularly with respect to female pupils. Attendance levels vary considerably between schools, and are often low in rural areas, especially during the farming season. Attendance by both teachers and pupils is low on occasions such as market days.

Structure and management of primary education

The transfer of management of the federal allocation for teachers' salaries and operational cost from LGA to NPEC/SPEBs has been largely successful in ensuring that teachers' salaries are paid. Nevertheless, the fact that Education Secretaries are responsible to SPEBs, rather than to the local councils which appoint them, has also often resulted in tensions between the LGA and SPEBs, conflicting pressures on the Education Secretaries, and a perception from the local government side of a lack of meaningful involvement in the management of the schools and the resources made available for them. SPEBs have also taken over a number of roles (and apparently the accompanying budgets) originally envisaged as the responsibility of the Local Government level — for example, those for supplies and maintenance.

There is limited access to information regarding the budget and expenditure of LGEA allocations. The supervision of primary schools is sometimes irregular and often

inadequate. Headmasters have no funds to respond to minor maintenance problems or to purchase supplies and incidentals.

Funding of primary education

Many of the problems enumerated above stem from the inadequacy of funding for primary education. The bulk of funding for primary education comes from the federal allocation to Local Government Councils. Federal and state governments, NGOs and host communities also contribute. In spite of these diverse sources of funding for primary education, sufficient resources are still not being made available to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure, provide essential educational materials, or even to pay teachers a living wage. The result is the parlous state of affairs documented in this report.

Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, the series of zonal and national workshops convened to discuss the conclusions and follow-up to the survey made a number of recommendations to address the constraints identified. These are given in Box 13 (findings and recommendations are also summarized in Table 6).

Box 13: Recommendations of the consultations

1. ***Community participation***

- PTAs should be involved more formally in the management of schools.
- The above recommendations should initially be implemented on a pilot basis, so as to test and demonstrate the value of community involvement in school management.
- Measures should be taken to build the capacity of PTAs and CBOs, and to foster such organizations where they do not exist.
- A matching grant facility should be created under the on-going WB Primary Education Project to support PTA and other community-based initiatives.

2. ***Staff conditions and training***

- The salary and the benefits of primary school teachers should be increased, including the implementation of the teacher salary scale (TSS) and its pegging to a cost of living index.
- More opportunities for in-service training should be provided to teachers, particularly those who are under-qualified.
- Teacher training programs, especially distance learning and sandwich courses, should be reviewed so as to increase their relevance to conditions in primary schools.
- An incentive program should be developed to address regional gender imbalances, encouraging recruitment of female teachers in the north and male teachers in the south.
- Minimum posting guidelines should be implemented so that teachers are stationed in a schools for a minimum of four years before being transferred.

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Box 13 *(continued)*: Recommendations of the consultations

3. Infrastructure and facilities

- LGEAs should be provided with funds for construction, repair and furnishings, as envisaged in Decree 96 of 1993.
- A fund should be made available for minor maintenance, repairs and supplies, to be managed by the headteacher in consultation with the PTA.
- Current maintenance arrangements should be reviewed, and a maintenance needs assessment undertaken.

4. Instructional materials

- LGEAs should be empowered to acquire and distribute instructional materials, as envisaged in Decree 96 of 1993.
- A clear and stable policy on text books should be developed by SPEBs to be observed by the LGEAs and schools. Recommended textbooks should be used for at least four years before being changed. Options should be developed in consultation with parents and communities for the provision of books on loan, through outright purchase, or other appropriate arrangements.

5. Enrollment, attendance and retention

- In areas where seasonal variations in attendance exist, LGEAs and schools should be allowed to modify their school schedules to accommodate local circumstances.
- There should be more community involvement and mobilization in promoting enrollment, attendance and retention, for example through advocacy and incentive pilots to increase parental demand for education, especially female enrollment. These should build on lessons from successful programs.

6. Structure and management of primary education

- The present administrative structure should be retained. However, it should be made more democratic and participatory by implementing the measures which follow.
- Education Secretaries should regularly brief LGA councils on plans, expenditures and achievements.
- LGEA council should ensure that LGEA accounts are properly audited.
- To increase accountability and transparency, LGEA budget and expenditures should be made accessible to the general public.
- An imprest account should be created for each school for immediate needs such as minor repairs, maintenance and materials. The use of these funds should be determined by the headmaster in consultation with PTAs/School Committees.
- Surpluses from NPEC allocation for teachers' salary should pass directly from the LGEA office to local government councils, since these funds were deducted from the Local Government account at source.

7. Funding for primary education

- The federal government should increase its per capita enrollment allocation to a level that would meet capital and recurrent needs and enable schools to function effectively.
- Cost sharing arrangements among government and other stakeholders should be reviewed and formalized.

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School, community and social capital

Many of the problems identified through the consultations are systemic and will only be solved through fundamental and far-reaching change in the financing and administration of the primary education sub-sector.

The consultations have also shown that the roots of the malaise of primary education lie in more general weaknesses in the governance of the public sector, in the effect of government's deficient performance on its relationship with community and civil society, and in the changing nature of communities themselves.

Any form of collaboration must rest upon a base of predictability, trust, and the flow of information. The roller-coaster of erratic policy changes and fiscal crises, exacerbated at the local level by unpredictable staff transfers, frequent financial charges on communities, decaying infrastructure, and unreliable supplies have been a poor foundation for partnership between government and community. In addition, communities have access to little or no information on the allocation and use of public resources for their schools. As important as increasing the levels of finance made available for primary education, therefore, will be the building of accountability and public confidence by establishing a stable and consultative policy framework, enhancing structures and opportunities for community participation, and making information much more generally available about how public funds are used.

As we have seen, one response of parents to the declining reliability of government's support for schools has been to take on a still greater role in maintaining them. No doubt this will continue. However, the increasing burden of management, maintenance and construction placed on parents is also leading to fatigue and disillusionment. Those who can afford it have turned to private schools. Others, rejecting the values which have infiltrated the public sector, have been able to reassert control over their schools through a rebuilt community, often one based on religious affiliation. Projecting current trends in the political economy and public administration, this kind of defensive revivalism seems likely to become increasingly common.

In sum, while the social capital inhering within communities and in school-community ties continues to play a vital role in the assuring provision of educational services, it being eroded by parents' increasing sense that the state is not meeting its side of the social contract of universal primary education. At the same time, changes in the social fabric may also be undermining the possibility of 'social capital' or 'coproduction' filling the growing gap. These changes include the declining value ascribed to education, the deteriorating social status of teachers, their decreasing propensity to live in the community and be involved in its affairs, and the polarization and fragmentation of the community itself. Combined with the disillusionment of parents, and the abandonment of the public school system in favor of private schools by the more prosperous and influential, these social and economic developments mean that the very conditions for

meaningful and constructive community participation are being undermined. In the attempt to reconstruct community through alternative institutional mechanisms, religion may serve as an effective social glue. However, experience has also shown it also to be a flammable political fuel.

In this report, as in much of the literature on social capital and state-society 'synergy', the concern has been to trace the influence of community solidarity and school-community relations on educational outcomes. However, causality also runs in the reverse direction: in the long term, the quality of education will influence the quality of social capital. Ill-educated, illiterate and unemployable school graduates will be able to make only a limited contribution to the cultural, social, civic and economic spheres, and will not make for the development of an informed and active civil society. Improving the quality of primary education is thus both an urgent priority, and one with long-term social implications.

***Table 6**: Summary of findings and recommendations*

Issue	*Recommendations*	*Responsibility*
1. Community participation		
Community-based organizations are overtaxed by multiple demands	Create a matching grant facility to support community-based and PTA initiatives	NPEC
The roles and expectations of community-based organizations are unclear	Involve PTAs more formally in school management	NPEC/SPEB/LGEA
The accountability and transparency of some PTAs is sometimes weak	Implement a pilot scheme for developing such new approaches to community involvement in primary education	NPEC
	Build capacity of PTAs and other CBOs and foster them where they do not exist	NPEC/LGEAs/PTAs/CBOs/Schools
2. Staff conditions and training		
Teachers not paid a living wage and are poorly motivated	Salaries and benefits of teachers should be increased	Federal and State Ministries of Education
Many teachers are under-qualified	Review teachers' training programs	
Existing training equips teachers inadequately for the conditions which they face	Provide in-service training opportunities	NPEC
Gender imbalance in numbers of teachers (insufficient women in north, men in south)	Improve design and appropriateness of distance learning courses	Teacher training institutes
Frequent and wholesale transfers disrupt teaching	Develop incentive program to address gender imbalance	NPEC/SPEBs
	Implement minimum posting guidelines	MoEs/ SPEBs
3. Infrastructure and facilities		
Classroom space and other facilities grossly inadequate	Provide LGEA with funds for construction, repairs and furnishing	NPEC/SPEB
Dilapidated state of buildings	Entrust headmaster/PTA with funds for minor repairs	NPEC/SPEB
Inadequate furnishings	Review current maintenance arrangements and conduct a maintenance needs assessment	NPEC/SPEB

Issue *(continued)*	**Recommendations**	**Responsibility**
4. Instructional materials		
Very few textbooks and instructional materials available in schools	Give LGEA responsibility for acquisition and distribution of instructional materials (excluding textbooks)	NPEC/SPEB
Frequent changes in recommended textbooks	Use recommended texts for at least four years	MoE/SPEB
Parents find current textbook-hire policy unacceptable	Develop options for the provision of textbooks through loan or purchase in consultation with parents	NPEC
Late supply of record books		
5. Enrollment, attendance and retention		
Regional imbalances in enrollment especially female enrollment	Flexible scheduling of school terms and attendance	NPEC MoEs
Irregular attendance, especially in rural areas	Community mobilization to promote enrollment, attendance and retention through advocacy programs	PTAs/ School Cmttees.
6. Structure and management of primary education		
Limited LGA input to management of schools, and LGEA Secretary accountability to LG Council	Education secretaries to brief LG Council regularly on plans, expenditures and achievements	LGEA Secretaries
Little information on amount or use of primary education funds available to schools or the public	LG Councils to ensure LGEA accounts are properly audited	LG Secretary
No funds available to headmaster	Information on LGEA budgets and expenditures should be made available to the general public	LGEA Secretaries/ LG Secretary
Irregular and inadequate supervision of schools	Create an imprest account under the control of headmasters, in consultation with PTA	
	Training and means of transport for supervisors	SPEB
7. Funding		
Funding is inadequate for staff, capital development, maintenance, and running costs	Increase in per capita enrollment allocation	Federal government
	Review and formalize cost-sharing arrangements among government agencies and other stakeholders	

Annex 1

SAMPLED LGAS AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Zone 1: North-East (Adamawa, Gombe, Yobe, Borno, Taraba and Bauchi States)

Yorro LGA, Tarraba State

1.1: ***Kassa*** Primary School
1.2: ***Pantisawa*** Special Primary School
1.3: ***Puppule*** Primary School

Dukku LGA, Gombe State

1.4: ***Gombe Abba*** Primary School
1.5: ***Malala*** Primary School
1.6: ***Dukku West*** Primary School

Maiduguri Metropolitan LGA, Borno State (Urban)

1.7: ***Bulumkutu*** Primary School
1.8: ***Gamboru*** Alhajiri Primary School
1.9: ***Wulari I*** Primary School

Zone 2: North-West (Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi and Kaduna States)

Yabo LGA, Sokoto State

2.1: ***Kilgori*** Model Primary School
2.2: ***Nizzamiya*** Model Primary School
2.3: ***Sarkin Shehu Kabi*** Model Primary School

Kachia LGA, Kaduna State

2.4: ***Maidamashi*** Primary School
2.5: ***Kenyi I*** Primary School
2.6: ***LGEA1***

Tarauni (Kano City) LGA, Kano State [Urban]

2.7: ***Gyadi Gyadi*** Special Primary School
2.8: ***Babelle IIa*** Islamiya Primary School
2.9: ***Gida Gona*** Primary School

Zone 3: North-Central (Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Kwara, Kogi, and Niger States and F.C.T.)

Rafi LGA, Niger State

3.1: ***Sabon Tashan Ushiba*** LGEA Primary School
3.2: ***Yelwan Kabitu*** Primary School
3.3: Central Primary School, ***Kagara***

Nasarawa LGA, Nasarawa State

3.4: LGEA Primary School, ***Kama-Otto***
3.5: LGEA Primary School, ***Tulluwa***
3.6: ***Nasarawa*** Pilot Central Primary School

Otukpo LGA, Benue State (Urban)

3.7: St. Joseph's Primary School, ***Unwabu Aokwu***
3.8: St. Michael's Primary School, ***Allan-Akpa***
3.9: St. Francis' Primary School, ***Otukpo***

Zone 4: South-East (Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu and Ebonyi States)

Ikwo LGA, Ebonyi State

4.1: Community Primary School, ***Noyo***
4.2: Community Primary School, ***Ohatekwe, Amagu***
4.3: Community Primary School, ***Ndufu-Echara***

Anaocha LGA, Anambra State

4.4: Community Primary School, ***Adazi-Enu***
4.5: Udokamma Primary School, ***Aguluizigbo***
4.6: Ugwuaba Primary School, ***Nneogidi, Agulu***

Aba North LGA, Abia State (Urban)

4.7: ***Golf Course*** Primary School I
4.8: ***Eziukwu*** Primary School II
4.9: ***Ogbor*** Primary School I

Zone 5: South-West (Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos States)

Ilaje LGA, Ondo State

5.1: St. Benedict's Primary School, ***Igbo-Olomi***
5.2: L.A. Primary School, ***Mahin***
5.3: Holy Trinity Primary School, ***Igbokoda***

Ogo-Oluwa LGA, Oyo State

5.4 Community Primary School, ***Baale***
5.5 Methodist Primary School, ***Lagbedu***/Pontela
5.6 Baptist Day School, ***Ajaawa***

Ikorodu LGA, Lagos State (Urban)

5.7: Community Primary Scool, ***Mowonla***
5.8: Anglican Primary Scool, ***Ijede***
5.9: Methodist Primary School, ***Ikorodu***

Zone 6: South-South (Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers, Bayelsa, Edo and Delta States)

Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa State

6.1: St, Michael's Primary School, **Oloibiri**
6.2: U.P.E. School, **Otabagi**
6.3: U.P.E. (Universal Primary Education) School, **Ogbia town**

Ogoja LGA, Cross River State

6.4: St. Charles' Primary School, **Ukpe**
6.5: St. George's Primary School, **Igodor**
6.6: Government Primary School, **Ogboja**

Oredo LGA (Benin City), Edo State (Urban)

6.7: **Oredo** Model Primary School
6.8: **Ighikiiyisi** Primary School
6.9: **Emotan** Primary School

Note: Within each zone, the two rural LGAs are listed first, then the urban. The sampled LGAs are shown on the map. Within LGAs, schools are numbered in order from most remote to the most accessible.

Annex 2

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